**POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN COLOMBIA.**
**PARTICIPATION AND VOTING BEHAVIOR IN VIOLENT CONTEXTS**

by

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# POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN COLOMBIA. PARTICIPATION AND VOTING BEHAVIOR IN VIOLENT CONTEXTS

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As an increasing number of nations developed democracies without being able to eliminate political violence, this study develops a theoretical framework and an empirical test for understanding the impact of violent contexts on electoral participation and vote choices. The general argument is that citizens living in violent contexts tend to adjust their political behavior in accordance to the objectives and ideological orientations proclaimed by the dominant armed actor. More precisely, electoral participation is expected to diminish as armed actors consolidate their control; yet disputed areas will suffer the biggest participation decline. This study also claims that citizens will be more likely to be supportive of candidates, and parties backed by the dominant armed actor. Finally, the effects of violent contexts on political behavior are not expected to be homogeneous, as minority party sympathizers are the most affected by violent contexts. The theory proposed here is tested at the individual and aggregate levels for the case of Colombia. Therefore, this dissertation deals with two different units of analysis, citizens and municipalities.

The individual level analysis suggests that citizens living in contested areas exhibit the lowest probability of participating in elections. Violent contexts also have a tremendous influence on vote intention. Going from areas dominated by left wing insurgents to regions

controlled by right wing paramilitaries, citizens are more likely to support a rightist presidential candidate. Lastly, sympathizers of minority parties are the most affected by violent contexts.

The municipal analysis shows that there is a significant reduction in turnout as armed actors increase their control. Electoral results are also affected by changes in violent contexts. As municipalities go from being under guerrilla influence to paramilitary control, local governments lean to the right. Finally, in municipalities governed by a leftist mayor the consolidation of paramilitaries produced the biggest reduction in turnout and local governments suffer the biggest movement towards the right.

In general, results indicate that political violence is an effective tool to model political behavior, as armed actors employ violence to shape individuals' political behavior by altering the expected value of certain political actions.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

## PREFACE

I could never have finished the journey I started six years ago without the support, help, and guidance of many people. First and foremost I would like to thank my advisor, Barry Ames. He believed in my potential and in my dissertation project, and supported me providing critical comments and sharp insights during my years in graduate school. I would also like to thank the three other members of my dissertation committee: Scott Morgenstern, Steven Finkel, and Gary Hoskin. Without a doubt, my dissertation and my doctoral education were strengthened by the input, feedback, and support that I received from them. Scott Morgenstern challenged my preconceptions many times pushing me to think my dissertation in a more innovative way. Steven Finkel was always very enthusiastic about my research project encouraging me to continue working on the relationship between violence and political behavior. He also gave me wise methodological advice that contributed to strengthen my work. Gary Hoskin has been a great mentor and an example to follow; I will be always grateful for his advice and enormous generosity.

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All these years we have been together, she has been my inspiration and enduring source of strength. Her contribution to this dissertation was enormous; she introduced me to new methods, read many pages and pointed out contradictions, discussed many of my ideas, and most notably she helped me to reach the end of this project by calming my anxieties about a dissertation that sometimes seemed to be endless. Thanks to her love, support and patience, graduate school and my life in Pittsburgh were wonderful and unforgettable experiences. I am also very grateful to my son, Pablo, who every day reminds me about what is really important in life and gave me a lot of reasons to finish this dissertation soon. To both of them and the little girl we are expecting, I dedicate this dissertation.

# 1.0    INTRODUCTION

Do social environments characterized by different levels of political violence have an impact on the functioning of electoral democracies? More precisely, in countries in which electoral democracy coexists with an internal armed conflict, what is the relationship between changes in the balance of power between the contending armed actors, electoral participation, and vote choices? As an increasing number of nations face the paradox of having developed democracies without being able to eliminate political violence, this dissertation assumes the challenge of studying the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior. Tackling this problem represents a crucial endeavor to understand the functioning of several new democracies, as well as a contribution to the comprehension of political behavior outside developed nations.

In most developed nations the emergence of a democratic order signified the overcoming political violence. Experiences of Western Europe and the United States, for example, show that democracy was a mechanism through which competing political forces were able to settle their differences without resorting to violence (Przeworski 1999). During the past few decades, electoral democracy has expanded to an important number of developing countries. Almost every Latin American nation and a growing number of African and Asian states use democratic procedures to elect their governments. However, unlike developed nations, many of these new democracies coexist with political violence and in some cases with legal and illegal agents willing to challenge democratic institutions and procedures. In some regions of India ethnic and

religious violence has directly affected citizens' electoral behavior (Wilkinson 2004); in the 2007 Nigerian elections political parties resorted to bribery and voter intimidation (Collier and Vicente 2008). Just to mention another example, as Colombian paramilitary groups consolidated their control in wide areas of the country, these organizations gained impressive electoral and political influence. Finally, it is important to mention that during the last two decades at least 33 countries suffered or are still experiencing internal conflicts, and in 27 of these cases national or local elections were held at some point during the conflict years (Collier and Hoeffler 2004).

Despite the existence of this paradox, most research on political behavior has been developed on the basis of experiences of countries where political violence does not represent a major challenge to the functioning of electoral democracy. My dissertation widens the literature on political behavior by analyzing electoral participation and vote choices for a case in which electoral processes take place in a violent environment.

Furthermore, the majority of studies have relied on individual determinants to explain phenomena such as political participation, vote choices, policy preferences, or partisanship. However, during the past few decades the study of the social logic of political behavior has regained prominence (Zuckerman 2005) as some scholars have been successful integrating a sociological dimension to classical political behavior models based on an individualistic paradigm (Johnston and Pattie 2005). Similarly, the emergence of new statistical methodologies no longer forces the researcher to assume that persons are atoms without ties to each other or to their social milieu. Despite growing attention to the effects of social contexts on political behavior, this literature has focused attention primarily on the effects of socioeconomic environments and social networks in developed countries. However, as electoral democracy has extended to developing nations, one can expect that outside Western Europe and the United

States additional contextual factors may affect individuals' political behavior and opinions. In particular, the electoral impact of social environments characterized by different levels of political violence deserves attention.

My dissertation studies the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior for the case of Colombia. This country provides an exceptional opportunity to study this link for several reasons. First, Colombia has been recognized as one of the most stable Latin American democracies (Hartlyn and Valenzuela 1997). Electoral processes have unfolded under relative open competition, fraud has been generally absent, and winning candidates have been considered legitimate by most citizens. Second, this nation has suffered a prolonged and bloody armed conflict between the State, left wing guerrillas, and paramilitary bands. Finally and more importantly, during the last two decades as the internal conflict intensified and powerful extra-institutional actors consolidated their power in several regions of the country, it is increasingly clear that political violence is having a tremendous effect on electoral processes, electoral outcomes, and the configuration of political power. In short, Colombia embodies a paradox that promoted the development of this dissertation: a relatively well established electoral democracy that functions in an environment of widespread political violence.

Drawing on insights from the literature on civil wars and from studies on the contextual determinants of political behavior, my dissertation develops a theoretical framework for understanding the impact of violent contexts on electoral participation and vote choice. The general argument of my work is that citizens living in a violent context tend to adjust their political behavior in accordance to the strategic objectives and ideological orientations proclaimed by the armed actor dominating the area. Hence, the extent to which a violent context affects electoral participation and voting behavior is a function of the level of control a violent

agent achieves in a given region. I argue that electoral participation will diminish as armed actors consolidate their territorial control; yet disputed areas will suffer the biggest decline in electoral participation. With respect to vote choices and electoral results, I state that as a single armed actor consolidates its territorial control, citizens will be more likely to be supportive of candidates, and parties backed by the dominant armed actor. Finally, I will argue that the effects of violent contexts on political behavior are not homogeneous, but moderated by partisanship. Specifically, I expect political violence to have the strongest impact on minority party identifiers' political behavior.

Theories in the field of political behavior are generally formulated at the individual level as political opinions and actions are performed by individual citizens. However, as the sum of these opinions and actions creates an aggregate reality, political behavior theories tend to be tested both at the individual and aggregate levels. The theoretical framework I propose in my dissertation will be empirically tested at both levels; therefore my dissertation deals with two different units of analysis, the individual and the municipality. That will allow me to find out whether or not my general hypotheses hold both at the individual and aggregate levels. In addition, I will be able to capture the extent to which the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior differs as we move from one level of analysis to the other.

My dissertation is divided into seven chapters. After this brief introduction, Chapter 2.0 consists of two sections; in the first one I present a general review of the literature on contextual effects, then I focus my attention on those studies that have dealt with the relationship between social contexts, electoral participation and vote choices. I close this section discussing a small group of analyses dealing with the relationship between political violence and elections. In the

second section of Chapter 2.0, I introduce my general theory and hypotheses on the relationship between violent contexts, political participation, and vote choice.

Chapter 3.0 is also divided into two parts. I begin by presenting a brief historical overview of the Colombian conflict emphasizing the emergence, evolution and political strategies of the different armed actors that shape Colombian political violence. The second part of Chapter 3.0 presents a case study. Through an analysis of Apartadó, a municipality that went from being controlled by the left wing insurgency to being dominated by right wing paramilitary bands, I will offer qualitative evidence on the relationship between different levels of armed actors' territorial control, electoral politics, and the configuration of local power.

At the center of my general argument is the idea that the extent to which a violent context affects electoral participation and voting behavior is a function of the level of control a violent agent achieves in a particular area. However, one of the major barriers my dissertation faces is that there is no reliable information on armed actors' levels of territorial control. In Chapter 4.0, I attempt to overcome this problem by presenting a methodology designed to capture the extent to which an armed actor controls a given municipality. Using information on armed actors' violent actions and based on a semiparametric group-based modeling approach that recognizes trajectories emerging from longitudinal data (Nagin 2005), I propose a classification procedure that allows me to categorize a particular municipality according the level of control enjoyed by each competing armed actor in that particular geographical unit.

In Chapter 5.0, I develop an empirical test of the hypotheses presented in Chapter 2.0. Here I use a two-level data structure and a series of hierarchical regression models to evaluate my theoretical framework. The main objective of this chapter is to assess the impact of violent contexts on citizens' likelihood of voting and their electoral preferences. Therefore, the

individual level data used in this chapter is complemented with municipal level variables measuring armed actors' military balance. Individual level data comes from a national survey conducted in 2005 by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) of Vanderbilt University. The main contextual level variables were created using the operationalization procedure introduced in Chapter 4.0.

The hypotheses introduced in Chapter 2.0 are evaluated at the municipal level in Chapter 6.0. The aim of this chapter is to test the impact on turnout and electoral results of changes in the balance of power between the contending armed actors. Empirical analyses in this chapter are based on a seven-wave panel in which waves correspond to each local election held in Colombia between 1988 and 2003. Longitudinal data used in Chapter 6.0 include information on turnout and electoral results, armed actor's levels of territorial dispute and control, as well as several variables capturing municipalities' political and socioeconomic characteristics.

In Chapter 7.0, I conclude this dissertation with a summary of the main empirical findings, and a discussion of the major implications for the literature on contextual effects and for the understanding of the relationship between political violence and electoral politics in developing democracies. My conclusion also highlights the limitations of this dissertation and discusses possible new research projects derived from this work that can enhance the findings presented in this dissertation.

# 2.0    VIOLENT CONTEXTS AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

In this chapter I will make a brief discussion on the social logic of political behavior, highlighting its main assumptions and the mechanisms though which social and political environments are expected to affect political behavior. Here I will also review the literature on political participation and vote choice, paying particular attention to those works that consider social and political contexts as factors explaining voting and electoral decisions. Finally, I will present a theory on the effects of violent contexts on electoral participation and vote choice.

## 2.1    BEYOND INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Contextual analysis is built on the assumption that political behavior cannot be explained apart from the environment in which it takes place. According to this perspective, individual characteristics alone cannot fully elucidate individuals' political actions and opinions. Along with these factors, political behavior must be understood in terms of citizens' relationship with the contexts and the contextual factors surrounding individual choices (Huckfeldt 1986). In other words, citizens' electoral choices are located at the intersection between individual preferences on the one hand, and environmentally imposed opportunities and constraints on the other. According to this view, social structures and political events that are exogenous to the

individuals, interpersonal networks, and even institutions, constitute the environment in which citizens form their political opinions and make their political decisions.

There are different mechanisms through which social and political contexts can affect political behavior. First, certain social and political conditions external to individuals may have a direct effect on political behavior as they limit people's experiences and choices. These social conditions are known as structurally imposed contexts (Huckfeldt 1986; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987), and include factors such as the ethnic and socioeconomic composition of a neighborhood, the local distribution of political preferences, or the diffusion of a political message. Here we are dealing with the most basic mechanism of contextual influence as individuals are expected to respond in a relative uniform fashion to certain characteristics of their social environment. However, structurally imposed contexts may have a stronger or weaker effect on political behavior depending on individual level characteristics (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1993; Weatherford 1982). For instance, Gimpel et. al. (2004) concluded that Republicans living in highly Democratic areas tended to have a low probability of voting; however, Democratic turnout was not affected by Republican dominance.

The effects of structurally imposed contexts on political behavior were studied for the first time in the 1950s. In their analysis of electoral processes and opinion formation in small communities, Berelson, Lazersfeld and McPhee (1954) showed that political preferences were more likely to be socially constructed than individually determined. At the same time, social psychologists such as Kurt Lewin and Herbert Simon highlighted the effects of social circumstances on individuals' perceptions, choices, and actions (Zuckerman 2005). Structurally imposed contexts have been found to have effects on phenomena such as electoral participation, vote choice, partisanship and political opinions, with contextual socioeconomic conditions being

8

the most studied determinants of political behavior (Giles and Dantico 1982; Huckfeldt 1979; Kenny 1992; Leighley 1990; Mondak et al. 1996).

A second mechanism through which social and political contexts affect political behavior is the social network. That is, individually constructed interpersonal interactions that, although a product of individuals' choices, are defined by environmental opportunities and constraints (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987). Here context has an influence on individuals' political behavior as people exchange points of view or are exposed to new political information as they interact with other individuals. The contextual influence in this case depends primarily on the existence of interpersonal communication; and the intensity of these contacts defines the strength of contextual influence (Weatherford 1982).

This line of research has made important contributions about the influence of other persons on individuals' political decisions and attitudes. For instance, studies of the relationship between social networks and political behavior have showed that people who discuss politics are more susceptible to experiencing changes in their opinions that are consistent with the views prevalent in their environment (Mutz 1997; Huckfeldt 1986). Or as MacKuen and Brown (1987) argued, individuals will tend to align their views with those dominant in their political milieu (474). Research on the effects of social networks also demonstrated that individuals have an important role articulating the social and political networks in which they become involved. In other words, individuals can shape their interaction networks. However, although individuals decide with whom they interact, the pool of individuals from which they can select their discussion partners is conditioned by their social context.

Another type contextual effect comes through the reference group. That is social norms to which individuals adhere, or a group of individuals whose opinions have acquired an

9

authoritative status in a given community. In other words, people may have certain social loyalties that influence their political perceptions and consequently their political behavior. In this case, it is not through interpersonal interactions that contextual influence occurs, but regularly through more subtle social pressures toward conformity (Weatherford 1982). The influence of reference groups on individuals' political behavior is proportional to group size, strength of conviction, and availability of sanctions against those who deviate from group norms.

This mechanism of contextual effect has been probably the least explored in the literature; in fact, reference group theory is not used much in political science today (Niemi and Weisberg 2001a: 328); to some extent, it has been replaced by the social identity theory. Although this approach is not at the core of the contextual effects literature, it posits a connection between social environments and political attitudes and opinions. According to this perspective there is a part of a person's identity resulting from their adherence to groups and the value and emotional significance people attach to group membership (Greene 1999).

All mechanisms of contextual influence are built on the assumption that "people who live in the midst of group X tend to act in ways similar to group X" (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1993: 293). However, a common criticism to contextual analyses, known as the self-selection argument, states that individuals who tend to act in ways similar to certain social group locate themselves in the middle of that group. In other words, individuals select their contexts, so the apparent effect of environmental factors on political behavior is nothing but the consequence of individuals' political predispositions. One response to the self-selection critique argues that there is nothing inconsistent between explanations that appeal to contextual hypotheses and the idea that people choose contexts. The fact that individuals have the chance to select their political networks and their political discussants does not eliminate the role of contexts in

defining certain opportunities and constraints that affect citizens' political behavior and opinions. A second reaction to this critique considers that contextual self-selection is an unlikely option. Most individuals are located in relatively large social contexts where the chances for self-selection on political grounds are very low (Huckfeldt 2007). A recent analysis showed that political heterogeneity is the norm within citizens' communication networks in modern democracies. Although, supporters of majority parties are less likely to experience political disagreement than minority party followers, on average, the political messages that citizens receive from one another are not necessarily mirror images of their own political preferences. (Huckfeldt et al. 2005a).

As mentioned in the introduction, this dissertation deals with the relationship between violent contexts and electoral participation and vote choice. Here, a violent environment is conceived as a structurally imposed context as it is a phenomenon external to most individuals. Unlike other structurally imposed contexts, political violence is coordinated by an agent or group of agents, and in many cases members of a given community may be the perpetrators of violent acts. However, political violence as a collective phenomenon transcends the individual so the average citizens cannot control the extent of political violence existing in their immediate surroundings.

## 2.2  CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND VOTING BEHAVIOR

Before presenting a theory on the relationship between violent environments and political participation and vote choice, in this section I will review the contributions of contextual analysis

11

to the understanding of participation and vote choice. Here I will also show that there is a paucity of research regarding the effects of environmental factors on political behavior in developing democracies; and that there is almost no research on the relationship between violent contexts and citizens' political behavior.

### 2.2.1 On the Social Logic of Political Participation

Although political participation has received wide-ranging scholarly attention, most of the studies on why people vote have relied on individual level characteristics. Thus, there is a well established positive correlation between people's socioeconomic characteristics and political participation. "Social, educational and financial attributes in individuals' demographic backgrounds give [people] resources to participate in politics"  (Ragsdale and Rusk 1993: 721). Individuals enjoying a higher socioeconomic status are more likely to vote because they can attain higher education levels and thus, access to better and relatively cheaper political information, and because civic skills are more likely to be possessed by the socioeconomic advantaged  (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Verba and Nie 1972; Brady et al. 1995; Rosenstone 1982). In addition, higher social status "[not only] facilitates the element of leisure time that is necessary for political participation, [but] economic resources [also] enhance the ability of individuals to go physically to the polls" (Fornos et al. 2004: 912). Similarly, the political participation literature has demonstrated that citizens who are psychologically engaged in politics are very likely to participate in elections (Finkel 1985; Hawkins et al. 1971; Ragsdale and Rusk 1993; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Seligson 1980). These individuals find politics more interesting and satisfying than others do, increasing their chances of participation. Also

politically engaged citizens tend to be more informed about politics, and information reduces participation costs.

A relatively smaller set of analyses suggests that social and political environments do have an impact on political participation. Relying on aggregate measures of individuals' local context, most traditional studies have reported a significant impact of neighborhood or census tract socioeconomic characteristics on participation. Huckfeldt (1979, 1986) found that high-status individuals living in affluent neighborhoods were more likely to participate than similar individuals living in poor areas. Giles and Dantico (1982) drew similar conclusions, however they did not find, as Huckfeldt did, that wealthy contexts depress political participation among low-status individuals. Overall, contextual poverty has been found to depress political participation, especially when it reaches extreme levels (Cohen and Dawson 1993). Likewise, other authors have shown a positive relationship between contextual education and voting (Leighley 1990; Rolfe 2004).

Beyond socioeconomic characteristics, scholars have also explored the impact of certain political environments on citizens' involvement into politics. Contextual distribution of partisanship has been associated with changes in political participation. Thus, individuals embedded in a politically homogeneous context, that is at odds with their own partisan preference, are more likely to abstain from voting, than citizens living in a partisan diverse environment (Gimpel et al. 2004; Gimpel and Lay 2005). In the same way, districts in which electoral races are close, coupled with a high uncertainty about electoral outcomes, tend to stimulate electoral participation (Caldeira and Patterson 1982; Cox and Munger 1989; Endersby et al. 2002). Finally, the amount of money invested by candidates in a particular locale has been

positively correlated with political participation (Caldeira and Patterson 1982; Cox and Munger 1989).

As scholarly interest in networks has increased, research has emerged linking social network characteristics to changes in political participation. On the one hand, networks' size has been found to increase citizens' political involvement (Nir 2005). On the other hand, a more developed line of research affirms that social networks that are more diverse relative to one's total network size and one's own social characteristics, produce higher levels of political participation (Kotler-Berkowitz 2005). One of the explanations for this link between network heterogeneity and political participation states that individuals who interact with a diverse network of political discussants will be exposed to recruitment and mobilization efforts by political entrepreneurs and community leaders, which will contribute to increasing their electoral participation (Gimpel and Lay 2005; Kotler-Berkowitz 2005). Another argument on the positive effect of heterogeneous social networks on participation states that, exposing people to diverse information and viewpoints enhances their political knowledge as individuals learn about alternative political perspectives and are forced to rethink their current political opinions. This political learning function of network heterogeneity is important because several studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between political knowledge and participation in politics (Gimpel and Lay 2005; Scheufele et al. 2004).

The positive expectation about the effect of network heterogeneity on political participation is not shared by all researchers. Mutz (2002) found that exposure to heterogeneous social networks might discourage citizens' willingness and ability to participate in elections. Two psychological mechanisms explain such an effect. First, citizens exposed to cross-cutting or heterogeneous social networks are more likely to be ambivalent about their own political views

which in turn reduce political participation. Second, cross-cutting networks create a situation in which citizens are accountable to conflicting constituencies; this exposes them to potential conflicts with their peers. So people will avoid politics as a mechanism of maintaining interpersonal social harmony.

### 2.2.2 On the Social Logic of Voting Behavior

Like in the case of political participation, most studies of voting behavior have paid little attention to context, "viewing vote choices as the product of a "personal" rather than a "social" calculus" (Beck et al. 2002: 57). Although the modern study of voting behavior was first guided by the sociological perspective introduced by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues at Columbia University (Berelson et al. 1954; Lazarsfeld et al. 1944), by the 1960s most studies of voting behavior were following individual base models. Two broad analytical paths have dominated the individually based models on voting behavior: the social-psychological and the economic theories.

The social-psychological approach (Campbell et al. 1960) states that long-term psychological predispositions and group attachments play a key mediating role in guiding citizens' political decisions. Within this theoretical perspective, researchers have demonstrated a relationship between self-reported partisanship and vote choice (Bartels 2000; Campbell et al. 1960). In the same way, a variety of social attributes are thought to be important in guiding vote choices, including gender, race, religion and marital status (Niemi and Weisberg 2001b).

Following Downs's argument that "each citizen casts his vote for the party he believes will provide him with more benefits than any other" (Downs 1957: 36), the economic approach argues that people use attitudinal factors, such as issue opinions and candidate evaluations, as a

basis of their vote choices (Dalton and Wattenberg 1993). Citizen evaluation of national

economic conditions has been a consistent predictor of vote choice in the Unites States. So

people tend to cast their vote as if elections were a referendum on the incumbent administration's

handling of the economy (Fiorina 1981; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Nadeau and Lewis-Beck

2001). Along with the economy, core-values also have been shown to impact how people vote.

For instance, citizens' attitudes towards homosexuality and abortion have been found to be

significant in several analyses of vote choice in the United States (Adams 1997; Layman and

Carmines 1997; Alvarez and Nagler 1995; Miller and Shanks 1996). Finally, a growing research

on candidate factors and voting has suggested that people may focus on the personal qualities of

candidates to assess how they will perform in office (Dalton and Wattenberg 1993). So using that

evaluation, citizens would make their vote choices (Kinder et al. 1980; Miller et al. 1986;

Rosenberg et al. 1991).

During the last few decades contextual analyses of voting behavior has experienced a

revival as a growing number of scholars have demonstrated that, despite former criticisms, social

and political contexts do play a significant role explaining citizens' political decisions. As in the

case of political participation, these works have studied the effects of structurally imposed

contexts and social networks. Analyses relying on aggregate contextual measures represent a

small portion of studies on social environments and voting behavior. Early works on the effects

of structural contexts showed that individuals living in low-status neighborhoods were more

likely to vote for left wing parties than were those living in affluent areas (Miller 1956; Putnam

1966). Recent studies demonstrated that, at least in the case of Britain, this finding continues to

be valid (Johnston and Pattie 2005). Similarly, others have showed that local economic

conditions affect evaluations of the national economy, and consequently their chances of

supporting the incumbent (Books and Prysby 1999; Johnston et al. 2000). However, other contextual factors particularly the local distribution of political preferences appeared to be unrelated to vote choice (Beck et al. 2002).

Contexts defined as social networks have displayed a consistent and significant impact on voting behavior. Thus, several studies concluded that when preferences of those individuals with whom a person discusses politics (discussion network) move toward a particular candidate, the chances she will support that candidate increase. In other words, the candidate favored by the discussion network enjoys an advantage over other candidates (Beck et al. 2002; Huckfeldt et al. 2004b; Kenny 1998; Levine 2005; Baker et al. 2006). Thus, social networks not only contribute to consolidating people's political preferences, they are also a key factor explaining preference change, when individuals face political disagreement among their social network (Baker et al. 2006; García and Smith 2008). This line of research has also explored what type of political discussants has a greater influence on people's political choices. For instance, Kenny (1998) concluded that discussants who follow politics and those perceived as knowledgeable are the most influential. In the same way, friendship and frequent contact tend to enhance the effect of social networks on citizens electoral choice.

Finally, a recent article by Baker, Ames, and Renno (2006), revealed that the effects of social contexts may be stronger in new democracies than in developed ones. Studying the case of Brazil, these authors showed that when party systems are weak partisan cues are also weak; consequently people tend make their vote decisions relying heavily on persuasive information gathered from their immediate social context. Thus, political discussion in new democracies is highly meaningful and politically consequential, as it can lead to massive preference change.

17

### 2.2.3　Violence, Elections and Political Behavior

As shown above, most of the literature on contextual effects has focused on the impact of socioeconomic contexts and social networks on political decisions and attitudes. Additionally, this literature, with a few exceptions (see: Baker et al. 2006), has emerged from studies of democracies characterized by a high degree of political stability. Thus, there is a lack of research about the effects of environmental factors characteristic of developing democracies on political behavior. Specifically, there is almost no research on the relationship between violent contexts and citizen's political behavior. Despite this gap in the contextual literature, within the social sciences the relationship between political violence and elections has received some attention.

On the relationship between violence and political behavior, a few studies have showed a negative effect of violence on political participation. A comparative analysis on electoral participation in Latin America found negative relationship between homicides and legislative turnout (Fornos et al. 2004: 924). Similarly, a recent study by Collier and Vicente (2008) on the impact of political violence on elections in Nigeria concluded that "electoral violence was an effective strategy in keeping those likely to vote for opponents away from the polls" (Collier and Vicente 2008: 27). These authors also demonstrated that when citizens' sense of security increased, a significant number of individuals who were planning to abstain from voting changed their minds and voted on Election Day. In the same way, my own research concluded that turnout reaches its lowest levels in those regions in which competing violent armed actors are fighting each other (García 2006).

The impact of political violence on voting behavior has received even less attention than political participation. Among the handful of works focusing on this subject, Elman and Wantchekon (2000) and Wantchekon (1999) suggested that in politically unstable contexts

information about the military strength of the competing political parties will affect voters' preferences and consequently electoral results. If the cost of violence is sufficiently high, voters may simply vote for the strongest party. Apparently that was the case of the 1997 Liberian elections when more than 70% of the electorate supported the former war lord Charles Taylor. During the campaign Taylor made clear what might happen if he were to lose the election; thus, many Liberians supported him as a way to avoid violence. Finally, from a historical perspective, studies focused on the American post Civil War period showed that the Democratic Party used fraud, intimidation and violence to block the mobilization of African American voters in the South. In fact, the impact of intimidation and fraud altered voter's behavior to an extent that if fraud and intimidation had not occurred the electoral results would have been completely different (Powell 1989; King 2001).

The limited research regarding the relationship between political violence and elections, and the non existence of studies on the impact of violent contexts on voting and vote choice, represents an enormous research opportunity. Additionally, as electoral democracy has proliferated to more nations, elections are now common in countries characterized by political instability, social unrest, and poverty. Therefore, analyzing the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior is a crucial step towards understanding citizens' political behavior outside developed democracies.

In the followings section I present a theoretical answer to the question of how social contexts characterized by different levels of political violence affect citizens' chances of participating in elections and their electoral choices.

## 2.3    VIOLENT CONTEXTS, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, AND VOTING BEHAVIOR: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

Political violence is unlikely to be irrational or spontaneous, it normally serves specific instrumental purposes;  in other words, political violence is used by its perpetrators to achieve diverse strategic goals (Tilly 1978).[1] According to Powell, political violence has three general objectives: "to change the bargaining rules of the democratic game, to undermine the support enjoyed by the regime or its major parties, or to intimidate the opposition while mobilizing support" (Powell 1982: 158).  In the same way, other scholars have suggested that one of the central functions of violence in civil wars is to generate citizens' obedience (Kalyvas 2006; Wickman-Crowley 1990; Kalyvas 1999). Thus, in contexts of internal conflict or civil war, the actual use of violence or the threat of its use is "intended to shape the behavior of a targeted audience by altering the expected value of particular actions" (Kalyvas 2006: 26).[2]

When an armed actor decides to use violence against the political system or certain individuals, the goal is to shape the social context in which individuals take political decisions. By doing so, contending armed actors seek to force individuals to behave in a way consistent with their political objectives. As a result, I argue that *individuals living in violent contexts will tend to adjust their political behaviors and opinions in accordance to the strategic objectives and ideological orientations proclaimed by the armed actor dominating the area.*

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[1] The literature on political violence conceives violence as either contingent or inherent. The second perspective argues that since violence is one of many alternative channels of group activity, it is chosen as a tactical calculation (Eckstein 1980). This paper follows the idea that violence is an inherent human behavior.
[2] Violence increases the cost of certain actions; therefore individuals have no chance but to accept the authority of the dominant armed actor.

This general expectation warrants a more detailed explanation. First, I assume that in violent contexts, there is a conflict between two competing armed actors. These actors may be the government (the incumbent) and an insurgent force (the challenger); or an illegal armed actor close to the government –a counterinsurgent force or a paramilitary group– and an insurgent group. Second, I also assume that these groups have political counterparts or "allied" political parties which compete in the electoral arena. Some armed actors have close links to political parties as they share a common political project –that was the case of many insurgent groups and the Communist Party, or the National Fascist Party and paramilitary groups in Italy (Elazar 2000). Other armed actors develop alliances with political parties; however, these pacts may be temporal and they do not necessarily imply a close ideological connection. They may be a product of strategic decisions to reach a common political goal.

The political dimension of armed actors suggests that they may also differ in terms of their strategies toward the political system. Some armed actors may want to *influence* politics by trying to affect, for example, electoral results; while others may want to *undermine* the existing political system, by blocking elections or by overthrowing elected authorities. In Colombia, for instance, paramilitaries represent the first strategy. These counter insurgent forces attempt to influence local and national politics, using violence to undermine the electoral support enjoyed by left wing parties, while they mobilize support for candidates close to them. Left-wing guerrillas, on the other hand, had used violence to undermine the current political regime (Pizarro 1996). Guerrillas are less interested in promoting candidates than in blocking elections and intimidating politicians.

In some cases armed actors may practice a "mixed" strategy, which implies that while a given armed actor is trying to influence politics, at the same time it attempts to undermine the

political system.  In Colombia, the FARC practiced a "mixed" strategy as this organization combined attacks against the state with electoral politics (Harnecker 1987). However, recently this guerrilla group has concentrated all its efforts in undermining the current political regime (Ferro and Uribe 2002). "Mixed" strategies tend to take place at the national level, as an armed actor changes its strategy from one region to another within the same country. At the local level, armed actors have less room for a "mixed" strategy, because they need to focus their activities and resources towards a single set of political institutions (local Executive and City Council), making inefficient to set in motion contradictory efforts. If an armed actor were to develop a "mixed" strategy towards a single set of political institutions, it would be acting as its own competitor. An armed actor cannot try to influence electoral outcomes while at the same time is blocking elections, because it will fail to fulfill one of these two strategies. Thus at the local level armed actors have to try either influence or undermine the political system. Because my analysis focuses on the local level, I will not analyze the impact of "mixed" strategies.

Finally, armed actors may also differ in terms of their level of control over a given region. On the one hand, there is a situation of fragmented control; this is typically the situation of disputed or contested areas in which there are two relatively equal military powers. In situations of fragmented control, violence can be exercised  by both sides (Kalyvas 1999: 252). On the other hand, there are areas of full or close to full control. Here one of the competing armed actors exercises full sovereignty or at least enjoys a dominant position. In this scenario the dominant actor controls the violent initiative and the means of violence as the other armed actor was expelled from the region or was forced to hide in the periphery. For instance, in Colombia during the late 1990s paramilitary forces took over several municipalities previously dominated by left wing insurgents who were forced to move to the rural hinterlands.

22

Overall we can talk about two different violent contexts: regions dominated by a single armed actor and disputed areas. However, since I am also concern about the strategic orientation of the dominating armed actor I will deal with three different violent contexts: areas dominated by a left wing armed group, regions under the influence of a right wing armed actor, and disputed areas. In each of these contexts it is possible to have different levels of domination or dispute.[3] In sum, the nature of a violent context is defined by armed actors' level of control or dispute over a region and their political strategies However, what are the specific impacts of different violent contexts on electoral participation, and voting behavior?

### 2.3.1 Political Participation

In any violent context one can expect electoral participation to decrease (Collier and Vicente 2008; García 2006). However, not all violent contexts are the same, so I expect the reduction of electoral participation to vary as we move from one context to another. When a single armed actor increases its control over a region, its political allies reach a dominant position while its political opponents grow weaker. In this type of context political parties representing political ideas opposing the dominant armed actor's ideology may reduce their presence. These parties and their sympathizers withdraw from politics as a way to protect their members from violence, or they simply disappear due to violent actions committed against their militants. Summing up, I expect a direct negative effect of a violent context on political participation, as the consolidation of an armed actor in a particular region contributes to increase the cost of participating in politics for those parties and citizens not allied with the dominant armed actor.

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[3] A more detailed description of these contexts will be presented in Chapter 4.

I now turn to disputed areas. Here the individual probability of voting is expected to be even lower than in controlled municipalities. Contested regions are characterized by high levels of indiscriminate violence against civilians and politicians (Kalyvas 2006, 1999). In these contexts the expression of any political position may expose individuals to violent attacks from any competing armed actor. Citizens living in these areas face a situation in which there is no safe action but inaction; therefore they will abstain from voting as a mechanism to protect themselves from political violence (García 2006). In other words, in disputed areas individuals will adopt a fence-sitting strategy as "contestation makes it difficult for most people to align with a single political actor" (Kalyvas 2006: 226).

Violent contexts may also have an indirect effect on political participation. First, as mentioned, when a single armed actor increases its level of dominance over a region its political opponents are weakened, and consequently political competition is expected to decrease. Similarly, in areas being contested by the competing armed actors, political parties will temporarily withdraw from the political arena as a mechanism to protect their members from indiscriminate violence; as a result political competition will be probably lower than in areas dominated by a single armed actor. [4] Consequently, I expect both dominated and contested areas to be politically homogeneous. As the contextual literature has showed, in this type of social environment political information flows and mobilization efforts decrease stimulating a reduction in electoral participation (Gimpel and Lay 2005; Kotler-Berkowitz 2005).

Based on the previous discussion, I now present a series of hypotheses on the relationship between violent contexts and political participation:

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[4] By the mid 1990s the dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries reached its peak in the Colombian municipality of Apartadó. As a result in 1994 there were no politicians willing to compete for the local executive.

H1: *As a single armed actor consolidates its control over a particular region, political participation is expected to decrease significantly.*

H2: *As the dispute between competing armed actors increases, political participation is expected to reach its lowest level.*

### 2.3.2 Voting Behavior

Like electoral participation, electoral preferences and vote choices may also be affected by armed actors' levels of control over a region. High levels of dominance give armed actors the chance of forcing individuals to support their political counterparts. Individuals living in these areas will have a higher probability of voting for these candidates or political parties than citizens living in other non dominated areas. However, this effect may be moderated by armed actors' strategies towards the political system. Armed actors attempting to influence politics are more likely to use their dominant status to promote the electoral success of certain candidates or political parties. Generally, these parties represent the existing political status quo. Conversely, armed actors attempting to undermine a political order will use their dominant position to promote electoral support for disloyal opposition parties (Linz 1978: 27), while they try to undermine political support for those parties around which the existing political status quo is articulated.

In Colombia paramilitaries embody the first case. They developed pacts with politicians from various political parties.[5] Like the paramilitaries, these politicians are located on the right wing of the ideological spectrum, and they represent the political status quo historically sustained

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[5] Recently, paramilitaries supported several politicians belonging to President Uribe's congressional coalition.

25

by the bipartisan hegemony. Guerrilla-controlled areas represent the second scenario. By the end of the 1990s, the FARC expressed its intention of undermining electoral support for Liberal and Conservative candidates. An insurgent commander declared that: "…in the areas which we control, we are not going to allow the traditional parties to make hay" (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 140). Thus, in these regions the individual probability of voting for parties and candidates representing the current status quo will decrease compared to areas controlled by the state or by paramilitary groups.

In disputed regions, the violent context will not have an effect on individuals' electoral preferences. Armed actors need to have a minimal advantage over their competitors to have an influence on individuals' electoral choice. As an armed actor is able to consolidate its military control in a certain region, it will be able to generate some sort of political order, and therefore it will be capable of having an influence on individuals' political behavior. This is not the situation in contested areas; therefore armed actors will not be able to use violence to have a particular effect on political outcomes.

The relationship between violent contexts and voting behavior can be summarized in the following hypotheses:

H3: *As a single armed actor consolidates its control over a particular region, citizens will be more likely to support those candidates and parties backed by the dominant armed actor.*

H3a: *As an armed actor attempts to influence the political system and consolidates its control in a given region, citizens will be more likely to support pro "status-quo" candidates.*

H3b: *As an armed actor attempting to undermine the political system consolidates its control in a given region, citizens will be less likely to support pro "status-quo" candidates.*

H4: *An increase in the level of dispute between competing armed actors is not expected to affect citizens' political preferences.*

### 2.3.3 The Mediating Effect of Partisanship

The theory formulated in the previous sections assumes that all individuals are equally affected by different violent contexts. However, as the contextual literature has demonstrated, structurally imposed contexts may have a stronger or weaker effect on political behavior depending on individual level characteristics (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1993; Weatherford 1982; Gimpel and Lay 2005). Therefore, it is worth asking which individuals are more affected by violent contexts and which are more resistant to environmental violence?

If there is almost no research about the relationship between violence and political behavior, studies on how the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior is mediated by individual level factors are nonexistent. However, within the contextual literature, there are several studies suggesting individual partisanship and ideological orientations play an important role mediating the effects of social contexts on political behavior. Particularly, a group of authors has showed that identifiers of political minorities and weak partisans are more likely to be affected by their social environments than those individuals identified with mainstream parties and citizens with strong partisan attachments (Canache et al. 1994; Finifter and Finifter 1989; Huckfeldt et al. 2005b; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987).

Sympathizers of majority parties are expected to be relatively impermeable to the effects of a context that contradicts their partisan allegiances, because these individuals know they are part of a national majority. This may give them confidence and resources to contradict those political preferences enjoying a dominant position in their immediate environment. Conversely,

27

militants of minority parties may feel an extra pressure towards compliance with majoritarian views when their immediate political environment supports the political parties dominating at the national level. In the same way, weak partisans are more likely to align their preferences with those dominating in their context. These individuals do not have deep rooted political identities; so adapting their political behavior to their context may be easy for weak partisans, as they lack a strong sense of partisan loyalty. Following this logic, I expect violent contexts to have a stronger effect on political participation and vote choices among sympathizers of minority parties, than among militants of majority parties.

As argued above, I expect political participation to decrease significantly in violent contexts and to reach its lowest level in those regions disputed by competing armed actors. Therefore, the negative effect a violent context exercises on the probability of participating in elections will be higher among members of minority parties and even higher for sympathizers of minority parties living in areas contested by the armed actors.

In the case of voting behavior, I expect sympathizers of minority parties to be more likely than militants of majority parties to align their electoral preferences with the political orientation proclaimed by the armed actor dominating the area. In other words, regardless of the armed actor dominating a particular region, members of majority parties will tend to vote for candidates representing their own party. Being part of a national majority may give mainstream party sympathizers confidence and resources to resist pressures coming from a dominant armed actor. For instance, these individuals may be able to use the party's national structure to denounce violent threats coming from armed actors. This will increase the price, for the dominant armed actor, of using violence against these individuals. In the same way, members of mainstream parties may have more access, than members of minority parties, to state protection.

Thus, based on the hypotheses introduced in the previous sections on the relationship between violent contexts and political participation and voting behavior, I formulate new expectations regarding how the effect of violent contexts on political participation and voting behavior is mediated by citizens' party identifications.

H5a: *As a single armed actor consolidates its control over a particular region, the individual probability of voting is expected to decrease significantly, particularly among sympathizers of minority parties.*

H5b: *As the dispute between competing armed actors increase, the individual probability of voting is expected to reach its lowest level, especially among sympathizers of minority parties.*

H6: *As a single armed actor consolidates its control over a particular region, citizens will be more likely to support those candidates and parties backed by the dominant armed actor. This effect will be stronger among sympathizers of minority political parties.*

## 3.0     VIOLENCE AND POLITICS IN COLOMBIA: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

This dissertation studies the impact of violent environments on political participation and vote choices in Colombia, a country in which elections and political violence have coexisted for more than three decades. As mentioned, the combination of violence and electoral processes is very unlikely in developed nations; however, as elections are now common in low-income societies, there is growing evidence that in several developing nations elections are held under the threat of violence. In Nigeria, the 2007 elections for president, state governors and legislators were marred by violence and intimidation. In this country the use of violence with electoral purposes was so pervasive that more than 300 people were killed during the two days of these elections (Collier and Vicente 2008). Similarly, in some regions of India elections also have been marred by violence. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, Hindi-Muslim polarization has contributed to the intimidation of both Hindi and Muslim voters affecting their electoral behavior (Wilkinson 2004).

Within Latin America, Colombia represents a "unique" opportunity to study the impact of violent contexts on political behavior. Despite the persistent political violence that has characterized this country during the second half of the twentieth century through the present, the electoral process has unfolded in a context of relative open competition between parties and candidates, a relative absence of fraud, and the perceived legitimacy of winning candidates (Kline 1995; Pecaut 2003). However, during the last two decades, as the internal conflict

intensified[6] it is increasingly apparent that the state has been unable to maintain its presence and to preserve the democratic rule of law in many parts of the country. While in the past Colombia was considered a "restricted democracy" due to its institutional constraints on political participation and political competition, in the present era limitations to democracy are consequence of exogenous factors. Thus, the expansion of powerful extrainstitutional actors contributed to constrain the free democratic competition in vast areas of the country (Bejarano and Pizarro 2005). Guerrillas, on the one hand, increased their actions against democratic institutions in an attempt to undermine them and in some cases to "influence" them. On the other hand, as paramilitary groups started to play a central role in the Colombian state's counterinsurgent strategy (Mauceri 2001: 55), these organizations expanded their presence and increased their military power, which gave them a chance to influence elections and having access to political power.

In this chapter I begin by with a historical overview of the violent conflict in Colombia as a way to characterize the context in which elections unfold in several areas of the country. Here, I will focus on the armed actors, their strategies, and the extent to which they dispute and control some regions of Colombia. Then I will illustrate the relationship between violent contexts and the configuration of local power through the case of Apartadó. This municipality experienced a strong guerrilla influence, a phase of dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries and finally a paramilitary hegemony. This case study will offer qualitative evidence on the relationship between different levels of armed actors territorial control and electoral politics, and it will give the reader a deeper understanding of the evolution of political violence in Colombia.

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[6] Some Colombian scholars have even suggested that during the last decade the Colombian conflict transformed itself into a civil war. See: Ramírez Tobón (2000).

31

Here I use secondary sources and my own knowledge of Colombia to reconstruct the historical evolution the armed conflict. The case study is also based on secondary sources, but it will rely as well on a series of interviews conducted in the summer of 2007 in Apartadó and Bogotá. Most of my interviewees were local politicians; however, I also talked to ex-paramilitaries, community leaders and, a former member of the armed forces. To maintain confidentiality each interviewee has been assigned a number, so each time I quote one of the interviews I will use the letter "I" followed by the interviewee's number for instance (I1). In Appendix A I present a list my interviewees describing their main activity.

### 3.1     AN OVERVIEW OF THE VIOLENT CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA

Although Colombia has struggled with political violence for the last 70 years, the current violent conflict finds its historical roots in the 1960s. Only a few years after the end of a deadly confrontation between the Liberal and Conservative parties known as *La Violencia*, Colombia saw the early expressions of a new violent era with the emergence of an array of left wing insurgent groups. The Cuban-inspired National Liberation Army (ELN) was formed in 1964 by middle class students and intellectuals, union members, and former Liberal guerrilla members. In 1966 a group of peasant self-defense leagues, influenced by the communist party, transformed into the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). One year later, the Maoist-influenced Popular Liberation Army (EPL) was created as the armed wing of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. Finally, in 1972, a more urban guerrilla group, the 19 of April Movement (M-19) was formed.

The first stage of the Colombian violent conflict goes from the early 1960s to the late 1970s. During this period, guerrillas were relatively small in size and concentrated their activities in peripheral areas of agrarian frontiers. The ELN focused most of its actions in a handful of municipalities in the departments of Santander and Antioquia; the FARC had presence mainly in the southern departments of Huila and Tolima; and the EPL operated in the northwest of Colombia in regions of Antioquia, Córdoba and Bolivar (Wickham-Crowley 1992). During this stage, guerrillas were mostly defensive organizations and due to their military weakness they tended to avoid combat with the armed forces. Their few offensive actions were ambushes against small army units and bank robberies. In their origins the FARC and the EPL were subordinated to the command of the Communist Party and the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party respectively (González et al. 2003; Pizarro Leongómez 1996). The ELN, on the other hand, was never associated with a political party and during its early years this organization put greater emphasis on the military dimension than on the political field as it followed Che Guevara's *Foco* theory.[7]

By the 1970s, Colombian guerrillas were in a deep crisis that led them close to extinction. This situation was mainly the consequence of a growing pressure by the Colombian Army. In the case of the ELN internal conflicts also contributed to intensify their crisis. After the 1970s military debacle, guerrillas changed their strategies. The FARC developed a successful plan of territorial expansion by dividing its existing guerrilla fronts.[8] From the late 1970s to 1984 the FARC went from 10 to 25 fronts (Echandía 1997: 3). As this organization grew, it was able to evolve from a self-defense organization to a guerrilla group capable of offensive actions. The

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[7] According to this theory the revolution must be triggered by small and mobile guerrilla *focos* (focuses) working in rural areas.

[8] A guerrilla front consists of at least 220 combatants (Ferro and Uribe 2002).

surviving members of the ELN moved to the eastern department of Arauca were they started to extort money from oil companies, assuring a constant and important flow of money that helped this armed group to increase its manpower and to expand its scope of action.[9] Finally the EPL increased its presence and activities in the Northwest of the country. At the same time that the FARC, the ELN and the EPL were experiencing a military recovery, the M-19 was gaining national attention thanks to its spectacular military actions.[10]

By the mid 1980s Colombian guerrillas had transformed from small rebel groups located in peripheral areas to more complex insurgent organizations with a growing presence in regions of the country more integrated into the political and economic mainstream. As guerrillas grew, they became one of the main concerns of the Colombian government, which in the early 1980s attempted to solve the insurgent problem through a negotiated strategy. In 1982 President Belisario Betancur started contacts with the guerrillas; soon after the Colombian government and the main insurgent groups, without the ELN, were sitting at the negotiation table. Although the peace dialogues produced a cease fire and an amnesty law that benefited many incarcerated rebels, they did not end political violence. The failure of the peace talks was a consequence, on the one hand, of the guerrillas' reluctance to renounce to the armed struggle. In fact, many argue that the insurgent groups used the negotiations to gain political momentum and strengthen their military apparatus (Bejarano 1990). On the other hand, President Betancur lacked the political backing to sustain peace talks with guerrillas. The military never supported the idea of a

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[9] This guerrilla increased its combatants from 150 in 1983, to 4,500 in 1998 (Vélez 2000: 31).

[10] In 1979 the M-19 dug a tunnel into a Colombian Army weapons depot, stealing over 5000 rifles; in1980 the M-19 stormed, during a cocktail party, the Dominical Republic embassy keeping hostages 14 ambassadors for more than a month.

negotiated solution to the guerrilla issue and the Liberal and Conservative parties withdrew their support for the negotiations a few months after their beginning (Bejarano 1990).

Parallel to the national government efforts to find a negotiated solution to the armed conflict, three events contributed to change the dynamics of political violence in Colombia. First, a process of administrative and political decentralization that started in 1988 gave armed actors a chance to augment their local political influence as political parties close to the insurgency or paramilitaries won local elections. Along with an increasing local political influence, decentralization also gave armed actors the opportunity to capture some of the financial resources transferred by the central government to local authorities. A second event that changed the dynamics of the violent conflict in Colombia was the rise of paramilitary groups, which in the 1980s emerged as a coalition of cattle ranchers, agro-industrial entrepreneurs, drug lords and members of the armed forces (Gutiérrez and Barón 2005: 18). These groups embodied a counterinsurgent and anti-left project and since the beginning they played a significant role preventing radical changes in the political and economic arenas, particularly eliminating the influence and presence of leftist parties in local politics (Romero 2003). Finally, the materialization of a link between armed actors and the illicit drug industry also played a key role transforming the dynamics of political violence in Colombia. With the appearance of coca fields in regions under guerrillas influence, these organizations found the opportunity to obtain abundant economic resources to sustain their military growth and geographical expansion. Although initially guerrillas were reluctant to use drug money to finance the revolution, their resistance did not endure. In the 1980s guerrillas started charging coca growers a tax-like contribution for moving cocaine out their regions. Later on, insurgent groups, particularly the FARC, opted for a deep involvement in the production and commercialization of cocaine. The

benefits obtained by the FARC from drug money can be noticed in the tremendous growth this organization experienced during the 1980s and 1990s. It went from 25 fronts in 1984 to more than 60 fronts in 1995 (Echandía 1997: 13).

Despite the unsuccessful peace talks between the Betancur administration and guerrillas, the Liberal governments of Virgilio Barco and César Gaviria attempted this strategy once again. However, this time negotiations produced the demobilization of the M-19, the EPL and an array of small guerrillas. Unlike the FARC and the ELN, the M-19 and the EPL did not experience a military and political expansion during the 1980s. The EPL was severely weakened by paramilitaries, and the M-19 suffered a deep political crisis after the tragic events that followed the siege of the *Palacio de Justicia* by this guerrilla group.[11] Thus, by the early 1990s only the FARC and the ELN remained active.

During the 1990s political violence continued on the rise as guerrillas and paramilitaries suffered important transformations. In the case of the FARC an emphasis on the military dimension marked its evolution during this decade. Originally linked to the Colombian Communist Party, the FARC drifted apart from it in the late 1980s, as some communist leaders started to question the validity of the "combination of all forms of struggle". From the late 1960s to the early 1990s the FARC had some involvement in electoral processes through the Communist Party and the *Union Patriótica* (UP) (Dudley 2008);[12] however, after approximately 3,500 militants from these parties were assassinated between 1986 and 1997, the FARC distanced itself from elections, as it started to consider them an unnecessary waste of lives (Ferro

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[11] On November 6, 1985, the M-19 seized the *Palacio de Justicia*. By the time the army regained control of the building, 100 people were dead, including 11 of the 24 Supreme Court justices (Kline 1999: 21).
[12] The *Unión Patriótica* (UP) was a political party linked to the FARC. It was created in the context of the peace talks of the early 1980s between the Colombian government and the FARC. It gained electoral importance at the local level between the late 1980s and the early 1990s.

and Uribe 2002: 144). Placing a strong emphasis on the military dimension, the FARC set in motion a new and successful warfare strategy consisting of increasing mobility of its units, augmenting the number of combatants involved in each military action, and using small pieces of artillery to support infantry troops (Ortiz 2006: 330). This strategy allowed the FARC to boost the effectiveness and impact of its actions. Between 1996 and 1999 this organization perpetrated at least six devastating actions against military units. By the late 1990s Colombian armed forces were compelled to leave some regions of the country to reduce their vulnerability, increasing the FARC influence in several regions, particularly in the southeast of Colombia.

The ELN, on the other hand, stopped its military growth and reduced the impact of its actions. Several factors explain the ELN's stagnancy. Unlike the FARC, the ELN had access to limited economic resources as it based its finances mostly on kidnappings. Second, this guerrilla group did not develop a strong control over the population living in its areas of influence, which limited its chances of increasing the number of combatants. Third, the ELN continued suffering internal divisions. Finally, this guerrilla group was severely affected by the paramilitary expansion of the 1990s (Ortiz 2006).

Major figures in the Colombian armed conflict during the last decade of the twentieth century were paramilitary groups. As mentioned they emerged in the 1980s; but during the 1990s these organizations suffered a tremendous growth as local elites decided to take action against guerrilla expansion and the Colombian state gave paramilitary bands a central role in its counterinsurgency strategy (Mauceri 2001). Paramilitary groups' main victims were militants of leftist parties and civilians suspected of being guerrilla members or sympathizers. The favored war strategy used by these organizations was mass killings; thus the magnitude of their military growth can be reflected in the number of massacres perpetrated by paramilitaries, which went

from fewer than 10 in 1988 to 98 in 2000. Finally, in 1997 paramilitary groups created a national federation – *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) – allowing these organizations to coordinate their counterinsurgent actions, to expand their presence to new regions, and to increase the number of troops. Between 1997 and 2000, the AUC augmented its size from 4,000 to 8,000 troops (Romero 2003).

The last stage in the development of Colombia's violent conflict starts with a new attempt by the Colombian government to reach a peace agreement with the insurgency and a change in the state's counterinsurgency strategy. In 1999 President Andrés Pastrana installed a negotiation table with the FARC. This time the insurgency demanded a demilitarized area of 45,000 square kilometers for developing peace talks. Negotiations extended until February 2002, but the parties were unable to reach any agreement. Like in the 1980s the FARC made a strategic use of peace talks, as there is evidence that this organization used the demilitarized zone as a safe haven from which they launched military actions and in which they kept kidnapped citizens.

Parallel to the peace talks with the FARC, the Colombian government launched a program of military modernization, which attempted to stop guerrilla expansion and to recover state presence in wide areas of the country. The main component of this program was the signing of a cooperation agreement with the Unites States known as *Plan Colombia*. In 2000 the Clinton administration supported the initiative by committing $1.3 billion in foreign aid to be executed in two years (Leal 2005: 530). After 2002 the American Congress has approved about $600 million a year in foreign aid to Colombia. Thanks to *Plan Colombia* the military had access to new equipment, registered improvements in mobility and intelligence gathering, and increased the number of troops dedicated to counterinsurgent actions. A few years after *Plan Colombia* was initiated Colombian armed forces started to experience a significant recovery that allowed them

to halt insurgent expansion and recuperate control of some regions traditionally under guerrilla influence. Similarly, armed forces' superiority over guerrillas forced the latter to reduce mobility and to abandon violent actions involving a large number of troops. However, the advances in the fight against insurgency experienced during the early 2000s were not only the consequence of a process of modernization of the military; they were also the product of the tremendous paramilitary expansion that took place between 1997 and 2001. Thus, the Colombian state regained control in several areas of the country due to the combined, and in some cases coordinated, actions of the renewed armed forces and paramilitary groups.

The most recent chapter in the evolution of the Colombian armed conflict goes from 2002 to the present. During these years the rightist government of Álvaro Uribe has played a dual strategy in an attempt to put an end to political violence. Regarding guerrillas, the Uribe administration has tried to defeat them in the battlefield. Colombian armed forces have continued recovering areas traditionally under guerrilla influence and recently they have been able to neutralize an important number of guerrilla commanders. According to the Colombian government, guerrillas are severely weakened and they are facing their final days. This seems to be the case of the ELN, as this organization took the biggest hits from the armed forces and paramilitary pressure. On the contrary, the FARC are not defeated. This group is significantly less powerful than in the 1990sand it will probably never recover the military capacity it once enjoyed; however, the FARC has managed to survive and is trying to react to an adverse military environment.

On the paramilitary field, the new government developed a completely different strategy. A few months after his inauguration, President Uribe started peace talks with the AUC that

concluded in 2003 with a cease fire and the disassembling of most paramilitary bands.[13] However, there is evidence that some paramilitary groups remain intact; and that other groups reorganized their structures after some paramilitary leaders abandoned the peace negotiations. Thus, the absolute number of paramilitary troops may have decreased; nonetheless the end of these organizations remains distant.

The brief historical overview of the Colombian conflict presented above allows me to highlight some key elements of the nature of armed actors and the relationship between political violence and electoral politics in Colombia. First, it is evident that armed actors, particularly guerrillas, are resilient organizations. These groups have adapted to changing and, in many cases, adverse conditions. However, armed actors have also paid an important political price as they have responded to new circumstances. The FARC is a paradigmatic case. This organization not only evolved from small self-defense groups into a strong and complex guerrilla group, it also demonstrated an extraordinary ability to overcome critical moments. During the 1970s, when the FARC was on the verge of extinction, it was able to develop a successful plan of territorial expansion based on a few surviving guerrilla fronts. On the other hand, actions taken by this organization to stay alive and expand its influence led it to develop a full engagement with the drug industry, which brought along a significant decline in its political activities and popular support. Today, the FARC is more known for its drug production, kidnappings and assassination, than for its political platform.

This links the discussion with a second element related to the nature of Colombian armed actors, which is their political evolution. All armed actors have combined violence and political action to promote their interests. However, the relative weight of military versus political actions,

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[13] According to the government more than 20,000 combatants were demobilized. However, the number of demobilized paramilitary troops was apparently inflated.

as part of armed actors' strategies, has changed over time. The early links between the Communist Party and the FARC, and the emergence of UP in the mid 1980s, reflect the emphasis put by the FARC on electoral politics during the early stages of its development. However, as the FARC became a strong military apparatus, some prominent leftists politicians started to criticize the armed struggle, and thousands of UP supporters were assassinated, the FARC decided to emphasize its military dimension. The case of the ELN describes somehow a different path. This guerrilla group remained relatively distant from electoral politics. In fact, it traditionally promoted electoral abstention (Harnecker 1987). In the mid 1980s, the ELN changed its political strategy and decided to develop and instrumental relationship with local power in an attempt to extract economic resources from local governments (Cubides 2004: 152). However, the deterioration suffered by this organization during the last decade reduced its military initiative as well as its political influence on elections. Thus, since the mid 1990s both the FARC and ELN have centered their "political" efforts towards blocking elections and attacking politicians from traditional parties.

Conversely paramilitaries' political evolution describes a process of increasing involvement into electoral politics. The first generation of paramilitary groups emphasized military actions. As these groups had close connections with the armed forces, most of their activities were devoted to support military operations attacking guerrillas' logistic networks. During this early stage, paramilitaries also targeted left wing politicians and sympathizers. As paramilitaries gained autonomy from the military and they were able to conquer several areas of the country, these groups started to have a strong influence on local and national elections. By the late 1990s, the AUC continued its fierce battle against guerrillas and the leftist parties and started to influence politics by "promoting" candidates, financing campaigns and developing

successful alliances with right wing politicians (Valencia 2007). Most of the politicians supported by the AUC belonged to the Conservative Party and the right wing of the Liberal party; however, in certain regions paramilitaries developed close links with small emerging political parties.[14] For instance, links between politicians and paramilitary groups were so deep that in 2001 four paramilitary commanders and 21 politicians (including 2 governors and several congress members) signed a political agreement to "build a new Colombia". This pact was known as Ralito's Accord (*Pacto de Ralito*). A couple of years later, a paramilitary commander declared that the AUC had control of 30% of the Colombian Congress.

## 3.2    VIOLENT CONTEXTS AND THE CONFIGURATION OF LOCAL POWER. THE CASE OF APARTADÓ

After a brief description of the evolution of the Colombian conflict and its main actors, in this section I will present, through the case of Apartadó, a more detailed assessment on the relationship between violent contexts and electoral politics. Like many Colombian municipalities, Apartadó experienced a strong guerrilla influence, followed by a phase of dispute between guerrillas and paramilitary bands, finally to fall under paramilitary control. This case allows me to capture different levels of armed actors' territorial control in a single social settingand what happened with electoral politics as a municipality moved from being controlled by guerrillas to paramilitary control.

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[14] These are the cases of *Movimiento de Convergencia Popular Cívica*, *Convergencia Ciudadana* and *Movimiento de Integración Popular.*

Through the case of Apartadó, I will present qualitative evidence supporting some of the main theoretical expectations of my dissertation. In the second chapter, I suggested that political participation is expected to reach its lowest level when armed actors are disputing a territory. The case presented in this section supports this expectation and allows me to describe the mechanism though which a dispute situation between competing armed actors contributes to depress electoral participation. The case of Apartadó suggests that the conflict between guerrillas and paramilitaries led to political deadlock and consequently to very low levels of electoral participation. This case also supports the idea that as armed actors reach a hegemonic position, they increase their electoral and political influence. Along these lines, the analysis of Apartadó will illustrate that the nature of this influence is mediated by armed actors' strategic orientations and their ability to use their military advantage to control social structures. In the case of Apartadó, armed actors have had a deep electoral and political impact as they developed organic links with unions and political parties. Finally, the case study will give some evidence on how the effect of a violent context on electoral politics is mediated by partisanship. As the conflict intensified in Apartadó militants of leftist parties were in a situation of greater vulnerability than sympathizers of other parties.

### 3.2.1 From the "Red" Corner of Colombia to "Paramilitaryland"

The municipality of Apartadó is located in the North-West corner of Colombia, close to the border with Panama, and a few kilometers from the Caribbean Sea. This municipality belongs to the department of Antioquia, and it is the "capital" of the so called "banana axis," a group of four municipalities that generate about 70% of the national banana production (Bonet 2000). During the last five decades Apartadó has suffered significant demographic pressures. In the 1950s and

43

1960s this municipality received migrants displaced by the partisan violence that affected other regions of Colombia. Later on, in the 1960s Apartadó suffered a massive influx of agricultural workers attracted by the beginning of the banana production in the area. Thus, over the last 50 years Apartadó experienced an important demographic transformation, as it went from about 7,000 inhabitants in 1964 to more than 100,000 residents in 2004. Despite these demographic pressures, land-ownership remained a system of large estates, most of them owned by economic elites not resident in the municipality.

In Apartadó and the "banana axis,"the Colombian state has been weak and inefficient (Ramírez Tobón 1997). This has allowed land owners and banana companies to ignore national labor regulations as they have imposed what Wood calls nonmarket regulations of labor or a repressive control of agricultural workers (Wood 2001). The nature of the state's weakness in this municipality represents, to some extent, the replacement of public institutions by private agents. A local politician expressed that situation:

"In the early 1980s everyone assumed that the state was the banana producers. I mean, people did not request things from the state, people requested public goods and services from the banana companies" (I2).

Finally, Apartadó has a tradition of social organization and armed actors' presence. Unions and land invasion movements have played an important role in this region, representing and promoting peasant and agricultural workers' interests. On the other hand, Marxist guerrillas and, more recently, paramilitaries have been very active in this municipality. These illegal organizations have developed links with the population, promoted their own political agendas, and, most importantly, they have been agents of extreme political violence.

Summing up, Apartadó represents a social setting in which many factors combine to produce a very unstable social and political environment. For the purpose of this dissertation, Apartadó illustrates the effects of different violent contexts on electoral politics, as this

municipality has been under control of guerrillas and paramilitaries and it has also been the site of a fierce confrontation between these illegal armed actors. In the following subsections, I will present a chronologic approach to the relationship between armed actors' levels of territorial control and the configuration of local power. My analysis of Apartadó will start analyzing the years of guerrilla control and electoral supremacy of the left. Then I will continue with the phase in which guerrillas and paramilitaries disputed control of the municipality. Finally, I will present the military and political supremacy of paramilitaries.

### 3.2.1.1 The "Revolutionary" Years, 1980 - 1992

By the late 1980s, the radical left had consolidated a political hegemony in Apartadó. In 1988, UP and *Frente Popular* (Popular Front), parties with close links with the FARC and the EPL respectively, elected 8 of the 13 council members of this municipality. In the same year, UP also won the local executive, as mayors were elected by popular vote for the first time in Colombian history (Suárez 2007). In a country dominated by the centrist Liberal and Conservative parties, the emergence of UP as a dominant political force in a small region of the country was an important breakthrough in the configuration of local power. However, the electoral success experienced by the left during the late 1980s was the consequence of a longtime political process in which guerrillas, political parties, and unions interacted to create a new political order.

The FARC entered Apartadó in the mid 1960s, only a few years later, in the early 1970s, the EPL expanded its range of action to this municipality (Ramírez Tobón 1997). Very soon, these organizations started to develop links with the local population; especially with peasants arriving from other regions of Colombia and people working in the banana plantations. In the 1960s the FARC had only one front acting in the "banana axis"; twenty years later four guerrilla

fronts were present in the regions. The EPL, was a smaller organization, so only one front acted in the "banana axis" (González et al. 2003).

From an organizational point of view, insurgent groups in the "banana axis" were what Weinstein calls "activist". That is organizations based on social endowments, or networks of repeated interactions whose members share a common political goal (Weinstein 2007). In the case of Apartadó, guerrillas used three strategies by to build a social base, which allowed them to transform their military power into territorial control and later into political influence. The first two strategies were very important to create territorial control. First, along with the Communist Party, guerrillas supported and coordinated land invasions in rural and urban areas. In Apartadó, several working class neighborhoods emerged as a product of the combined pressures of guerrillas and social movements. Second, Marxist guerrillas were key players in the emergence and consolidation of banana workers unions in the region. In 1964 *Sintrabanano* was founded; this was a union under the influence of the FARC and the Communist Party. In the early 1970s, the EPL and the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party took control over *Sintagro*, a union originally founded by members of the Conservative Party. Taking control of unions was very important for guerrillas' territorial consolidation, because managing a union meant controlling its members and the plantations where they worked. As the influence of insurgent groups on unions increased, people in Aparatadó started to talk about FARC's plantations and EPL's plantations. Finally, insurgent groups, specially the FARC, transformed their social support into a solid electoral base. As a result, guerrillas started to participate in electoral politics through their political counterparts.

Thanks to these strategies insurgent groups were very successful in transforming their military power into strong and deep links with social movements and political organizations. In

fact, the connection between guerrillas, unions and political parties is the distinctive feature of the relationship between armed actors and politics in Apartadó. The link between these three organizations was so close that they developed an organic connection. One local politician put it bluntly:

"In Apartadó, UP, the Communist Party, and FARC were the same. (…) Some individuals were at the same time local political leaders and military commanders. (…) The Communist Party had different facets, for instance, there was the armed component, and there was the union component" (I2).

As the military power of the FARC and the EPL increased and their links with unions and political parties consolidated, armed actors transformed their territorial control into political influence. However, the extent of this influence was a function of the ideological and strategic orientations of each guerrilla group. Until the mid 1990s the strategy followed by the FARC was to combine military actions with political activism. This plan was set in motion by the FARC nationwide, as they followed the Communist doctrine of "combining all forms of struggle". Thus, the military expansion the FARC underwent in the "banana axis" between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, allowed this organization to build an electoral base of support that helped FARC to penetrate Apartado's City Council. In the early 1980s leftist parties represented between 24 and 29 percent of the total vote for the City Council. In 1986 when UP, the party supported by the FARC, competed for the first time in local and national elections, this percentage jumped to 48, making UP the majority party, followed by the Liberal party (RNEC 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986).

In contrast, the EPL historically rejected electoral politics; as a result this guerrilla group placed more emphasis on developing social support by penetrating banana workers unions. During the 1980s *Sintagro*, the union controlled by the EPL, became the biggest one in the "banana axis" with 76% of unionized workers affiliated with this organization (Ramírez Tobón

1997). This meant that the EPL, regardless of being a smaller group than the FARC, had control of most banana plantations. Thanks to this strategy, the EPL emerged as the most influential guerrilla in the region. And despite EPL's original rejection of electoral politics, by the late 1980s it started to participate in elections through a small party called Popular Front. Although this party only obtained a couple of seats on the City Council of Apartadó, these seats permitted the left to consolidate a dominant position in this body between 1988 and 1992.

By the mid 1980s, two events created political opportunities guerrillas used to consolidate their political influence in the region (Tarrow 1999). As I mentioned, in 1982 the government of Belisario Betancur initiated peace talks with Colombian guerrillas. Although, these negotiations did not put an end to the internal conflict, the cease fire accorded in 1984 between the government and the insurgency was used by Marxist guerrillas to extend their influence in Apartadó. The peace process created a window of opportunity for the insurgency to promote affiliations with unions, as government pressures against workers organizations and guerrillas were significantly reduced. Between 1984 and 1985, the union controlled by the EPL went from 147 members to about 4,500 (García 1996: 125), by the mid 1980s close to 60% of banana workers were affiliated with the unions (Romero 2003: 173). The truce between the government and the guerrillas also resulted in the emergence of *Unión Patriótica* (UP), a political party close to the FARC. This party gained national momentum by the late 1980s and in Apartadó it soon became the main political force.

A second event that gave guerrillas a chance of increasing their political influence in some regions of Colombia was the 1986 constitutional reform. This constitutional change made possible the popular election of mayors and the fiscal decentralization. Once mayors were elected by popular vote, the electoral base built by the FARC helped UP to win Apartadó's local

48

executive. This was a crucial event for the insurgency in terms of gaining political power in the region. The local executive is not only more important symbolically than the City Council, but after 1986 this office gained significant power. With the 1986 constitutional reform mayors obtained access to more fiscal resources; in addition they gained the autonomy required to decide where to invest them.

The process through which guerrillas transformed their military influence into political power was not absent of conflicts between the insurgent groups. I have argued that an armed actor needs to consolidate territorial control in order to exercise its political influence. This statement assumes a single dominant armed actor monopolizing the use of violence. However, in the case of Apartadó there was a duopoly. Thus, even though the FARC and the EPL were both revolutionary movements looking to transform the status quo, they were competing to capture a single social and political base. Once the strategy followed by the EPL of building a social base through unions proved to be very successful and placed this guerrilla group in a privileged position among agricultural workers and in terms of territorial control, the FARC challenged EPL increasing its presence and actions in the banana plantations. Between 1985 and 1986 the FARC and the EPL competed violently for the control of unions (García 1996); however neither of them was able fully to control banana workers' organizations. In 1987 the fight between the guerrillas for the control of the unions came to an end and both unions started to coordinate their actions. Later in 1989 both unions merged, creating *Sintrainagro*. Thanks to this pact, negotiations between the banana companies and the allied unions resulted in a number of victories for the latter organization. The government and the banana companies acknowledged the unions as a legitimate interlocutor; the companies accepted wage increases, an eight hour shift, and the elimination of workers' shacks from banana plantations (Romero 2003).

49

In the electoral arena, the insurgent groups also decided to cooperate. In the 1988 local elections, a coalition between UP and *Frente Popular* won the local executive. The radical left also got control of six out of eight seats in Apartadó's City Council. In the 1990 and 1992 local elections, UP won again the local executive, and the UP - *Frente Popular* coalition remained the most important political force in the City Council.

During the 1980s, or what I have called the "revolutionary years,"insurgent groups emerged in Apartadó, as hegemonic actors capable of having a deep influence in local politics. This situation was a consequence of FARC and EPL's military growth which allowed them to increase their social and political work with peasants and agricultural workers and to consolidate their territorial expansion in the region. More precisely, their military power allowed them to create a favorable environment for the emergence of the left as the dominant political force in the municipality.

**3.2.1.2 The Dispute for the Municipality, 1992 - 1997**

The rise of the left in Apartadó was not smooth; however, only in the early 1990s local elites supported by paramilitary bands managed to overthrow the political project built by the insurgency in the region. Traditionally, land owners and banana companies opposed, in many cases violently, land invasions and the formation of unions. However, before the 1980s, these processes did not represent a big threat to the regional status quo and the local economy. Many invasions took place in unproductive lands and in other cases they were allowed by landowners. On the other hand, between 1964 and 1984 unions were so weak they did not menace the profitability of the banana business. When unions were powerful enough to affect the banana businesses' returns and the radical left took over local political power, local and departmental elites faced a situation they were not willing to tolerate. As a result, they used violence to fight

guerrillas and their social and political counterparts. Paramilitaries were the main actors in the elites' attempt to regain control of Apartadó. Once this group entered the region, Apartadó and the "banana axis" experienced the most violent period in recent history. As a consequence of the dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries for the control of the municipality during these years, partisan competition reached a deadlock situation. As a result, there were no politicians willing to compete in the 1994 mayoral elections and electoral participation suffered a significant reduction.

Historically, the Colombian state, land owners, and banana companies used violence to repress peasants and workers who demanded land or better working conditions (García 1996). However, only in the late 1980s local elites produced an organized response to the rise of the left in the "banana axis". In 1988, paramilitary groups arriving from Puerto Boyacá[15] entered the region perpetrating massacres on at least two banana plantations. However, the first paramilitary offensive did not succeed as guerrillas and their social and political structures were able to repel the attacks (Suárez 2007). A couple of years later, paramilitary bands formed by ranchers from the neighboring department of Córdoba arrived once again to the "banana axis". This time paramilitaries caused great damage to the EPL and its social structures.

Three years after the first paramilitary groups entered the area, the EPL demobilized. EPL's decision of abandoning armed struggle has been explained by taking into account various factors. In the first place, the end of this guerrilla group was in part the consequence of the joint pressures of paramilitaries and state forces. Secondly, according to former EPL members, they decided to negotiate once the revolutionary experiment threatened the survival of the banana industry in the region (Villarraga and Plazas 1994: 390). In fact, by the late 1980s banana

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[15] Puerto Boyacá is a small town located about 360 kilometers northwest of Bogotá. This municipality is recognized as the birthplace of paramilitary bands (Gutiérrez and Barón 2005).

companies started to move their plantations to Central America and other regions of Colombia, where they were able to grow bananas at a lower price than in Apartadó and the other municipalities of the axis. According to this view the EPL decided to cooperate with the local elites in an attempt to save the regional economy (Romero 2003; Suárez 2007).

Once the EPL was dismantled one of the pillars sustaining the insurgent hegemony of Apartadó was gone and a phase of dispute for the control of the municipality was about to begin. The 1991 peace process that transformed the EPL into a political party known as *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* (Hope, Peace and Freedom) was criticized by the FARC as this organization perceived the demobilization as a treason to the revolution. Once the EPL demobilized, the FARC attempted to gain control of plantations previously dominated by the former guerrilla. However, the EPL, now a political party, continued its social and political work in these territories in an attempt to build up an electoral base. Additionally, *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* challenged the electoral hegemony of UP in the urban areas of Apartadó. In 1992, *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad*, supported by the banana companies, coordinated a massive land invasion in the heart of Apartadó resulting in the formation of a neighborhood called *La Chinita*. The 5,000 families located in *La Chinita* emerged as the new electoral base of the *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad*. Thus, tensions between the FARC and the new political party started to emerge. In addition, some EPL actions were seen by the FARC as a clear signal that after the negotiation the former guerrilla was joining the enemy camp. First, many former ELP combatants enrolled in the local branch of the state intelligence agency. Secondly, after negotiating with the Colombian government, the EPL also reached an agreement with paramilitary bands present in the area.

The tension between the FARC and *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* resulted in a violent confrontation that moved the former guerrilla close to the paramilitary side. The dispute was

triggered in January of 1994 when the FARC entered *La Chinita* executing 47 *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* sympathizers. *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* organized its defense, creating an urban militia called *Comandos Populares* (Popular Commands) and approaching paramilitaries. According to a paramilitary commander six hundred former EPL troops joined paramilitary bands after the FARC started its actions against the members of *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* (Aranguren 2001: 229).

Political violence augmented once there was an open dispute between the FARC and *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad*, and paramilitaries reentered Apartadó with the purpose of expelling from the region leftist guerrillas and the UP. Political homicides in Apartadó increased from about 15 in 1991 to more than 50 in 1994.[16] As more and more members of UP and *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* were assassinated, it became clear that in a disputed context between armed actors, normal electoral politics was almost impossible in Apartadó. The campaign for the October 1994 local elections represented a threat of more political violence; for that reason local political parties were not willing to risk their top party officials by nominating candidates for mayoral elections. In an attempt to reduce the perspective of a deadly electoral campaign, and in an effort to maintain electoral politics, the archbishop of Apartadó proposed that the contending parties nominate a single candidate for the local executive. This candidate needed to be an outsider without links to any local political party. Twelve political groups accepted this proposal known as "Apartadó's Consensus," nominating Gloria Cuartas, a social worker without previous political experience as the single candidate for the local executive. She eventually became the fourth mayor of Apartadó elected by popular vote.

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[16] The 1994 count of political homicides includes the 47 victims of *La Chinita* massacre.

Political competition was not totally dismantled in 1994. The campaign for the City Council was relatively competitive as political parties presented their lists. It is not clear why these elections were not included in "Apartadó's Consensus"; however there are some possible reasons why parties did not dismantle political competition for the City Council. First, as a collegiate body, the City Council offered parties more chances of winning. Unlike competition for the local executive, these elections were not a zero-sum game. Second, city councils are not the core of municipal power, so the dispute for this institution was not as crucial as the one for the local executive.

Political participation for mayoral elections in Apartadó has been historically low with an average turnout of 33%;[17] however, the 1994 local elections registered the lowest turnout in the history of local elections in this municipality with only 21% of electoral participation (Figure 1). The case of Apartadó reflects how difficult it is for politicians and citizens to take any political position in a context of dispute between armed actors. Political violence forced parties to withdraw from electoral politics in an attempt to protect their members from violent attacks. A former EPL member summarizes the situation:

"When the dispute started, we politicians were on the run. We were not willing to support this or that political position or candidate because we were in the middle of guerrillas and paramilitaries. Armed actors were watching who was with whom. If you were, let me say, close to guerrillas and I said hi to you, paramilitaries were ready to punish me" (I8).

Similarly, citizens may have adopted a fence-sitting strategy as "contestation makes it difficult for most people to align with a single political actor" (Kalyvas 2006: 226). Thus, turnout reached its lowest level in 1994, as there were no partisan efforts to mobilize the electorate to vote and the dispute forced most people to see politics from the outside.

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[17] The national average for mayoral elections for the period 1988 – 2003 was 56%.
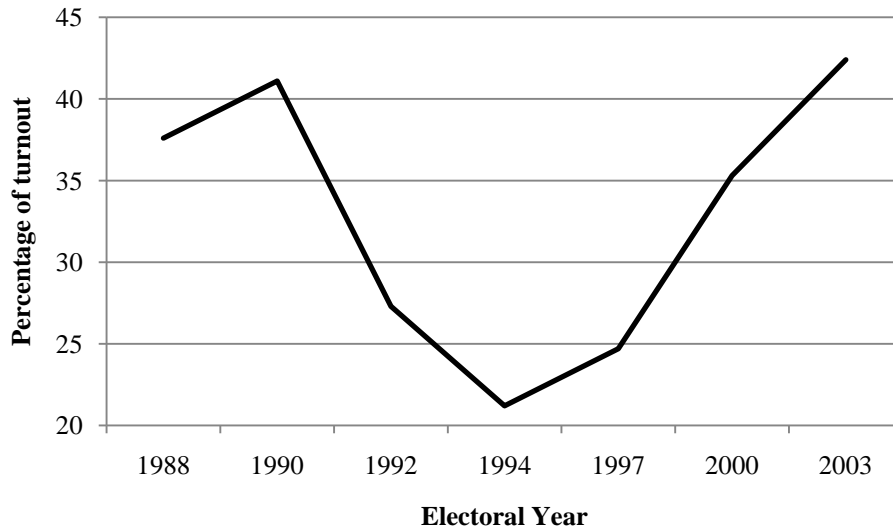
**Figure 1: Percentages of Turnout. Apartado's Mayoral Elections, 1988-2003**

After eight years of being the dominant political party in Apartadó's City Council, UP lost this status in 1994, as it only retained 4 of the 6 seats won in 1992. *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* emerged as the main political party in the City Council with five seats. This represented a significant electoral advance for the former EPL, taking into account that this organization never had a very strong electoral base in the municipality. From 1988 to 1992 *Frente Popular*, the political party linked to the EPL, elected only two council members.

The 1994 local elections and the years after this event represented a moment of political transition in Apartadó. In words of an ex-mayor the "consensus" was part of a policy of "extermination of the left from the region and the imposition of a new economic model" (I10). The radical left represented by the UP began to disappear; *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* emerged as the dominant political force and the Liberal party regained some of the electoral power it had lost with the success of UP.

Between 1995 and 1997, the left in Apartadó was physically exterminated as paramilitaries spread their presence and increased their power in the region. Two council members elected by UP in 1994 were assassinated in 1995, many leftist politicians were forced to leave the region or the country, and more than two hundred UP members and sympathizers were killed in massacres committed by paramilitaries in the "banana axis" (Suárez 2007: 169). The FARC responded to paramilitary violence against the UP with the assassination of various members of *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad*, and with a series of massacres. During these years political violence followed logic of mutual retaliations. A former paramilitary explains:

"If they killed one of our own council members we went out and assassinated one of their politicians; if the FARC committed a massacre in one of our plantations or neighborhoods, we did the same in one of their territories" (I6).

### 3.2.1.3 The Paramilitary Supremacy, 1997 - 2003

After almost four years of dispute between the FARC and the paramilitaries, the latter group emerged as the dominant armed actor in Apartadó. By 1997 armed forces and paramilitary actions forced the FARC to leave the municipality, finding refuge in the mountains surrounding the "banana axis". In addition, in 1997 this armed group formally rejected electoral politics and started to promote abstention (Ferro and Uribe 2002). Thus, although the FARC remained present in the area, its political influence in Apartadó disappeared. On the electoral side, by the late 1990s the radical left, represented by the UP, was gone from Apartadó as leftist politicians and sympathizers were killed or forced to leave the region (Romero 2003). In 1997 the surviving UP militants refused to participate in the October local elections due to the continuous violent attacks against them. Similarly, UP militants abandoned *Sintrainagro*, which allowed *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* to gain total control of the banana workers' organization. Finally, a number of

UP politicians were imprisoned for their alleged participation in violent acts against *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* sympathizers.[18]

The military supremacy of paramilitaries in Apartadó allowed this organization to exercise a strong political influence in the municipality. This was in part possible, thanks to the alliance between paramilitaries and the former EPL. When *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* approached paramilitaries looking for protection against FARC violence, paramilitaries gained access to the social and political organizations previously controlled by the EPL. Likewise, *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* and the banana workers union modified their political agenda adapting it to the interests of paramilitaries, land owners and banana companies. This was captured by the words of a paramilitary commander who expressed that: "Strikes have not occurred in the banana axis during the last few years, the union is now working hand by hand with owners to promote the region" (Aranguren 2001: 226). Thus, like happened with guerrillas in the 1980s, the military and political success of paramilitaries in Apartadó was consequence of a coalition between military, social, and political organizations. However, this coalition was wider than the one guerrillas led in the 1980s. It included former guerrillas, land owners, banana companies, cattle ranchers, paramilitaries, and even local drug lords (Romero 2003: 246).

Once paramilitaries consolidated their military hegemony in the "banana axis,"*Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* emerged as the dominant political power in Apartadó. Similarly the Liberal party regained political presence in the municipality. In 1997 and 2000, a candidate supported by *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* won the local executive; in 2003, for the first time in Apartadó's history, a mayor from the Liberal party was elected by popular vote. In the City Council, the former EPL obtained 6, 5, and 3 seats in the 1997, 2000, and 2003 elections

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[18] The most renowned case was Nelson Campo, a former mayor of Apartadó who was condemned for participating in *La Chinita* massacre (Romero 2003).

respectively. The Liberal party elected 5 council members in 1997, 2000, and 2003. In short, paramilitary territorial hegemony created a new social and political order favorable to the interest of local elites, in which the former EPL found a place once this organization modified its political agenda. The new political order is summarized by a former council member in the following way: "The council members elected by the UP in the 1980s? All are dead, all of them. The people from the former EPL, they are still doing politics in the municipality" (I7).

The demobilization of paramilitary bands in 2003 did not change significantly the political situation in Apartadó. *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* experienced a reduction in its electoral power in 2003; however this organization retained a strong influence in the banana workers union. The electoral arena continues to be dominated by political parties located on the right of the ideological spectrum. The new political order paramilitaries created in the municipality is now sustained by the Colombian state and its armed forces, banana companies, the banana workers union, and a group of political parties favorable to president Uribe. The FARC has attempted to regain control of rural areas; however, its military capacity is reduced, and, more importantly, it lacks the social and political networks that in the past allowed this guerrilla to build a "revolutionary" political order in Apartadó.

The case of Apartadó offered qualitative evidence on the nature of the relationship between violent contexts and the configuration of local power. Consistent with my expectations, once armed actors achieved a hegemonic position, elections were won by political parties close to their ideological orientation. On the other hand, when guerrillas and paramilitaries started to battle for the control of the municipality, a deadlock of partisan politics took place and consequently political participation significantly diminished. This case study also showed that the electoral influence obtained by armed actors in Apartadó was augmented by factors that went

58

beyond armed actors' territorial control. First, both guerrillas and paramilitaries developed close links with social and political organizations. Thus, the relationship between armed actors, unions, and political parties allowed the FARC, the EPL, and paramilitaries to transform their territorial control into electoral success. Second, political opportunities also played a key role increasing the political power of armed actors. Guerrillas strategically used the peace talks with the government to promote their social and political organizations. Similarly, popular election of mayors opened the door to the political supremacy of the radical left in Apartadó.

# 4.0    AN OPERATIONALIZATION OF ARMED ACTORS' TERRITORIAL CONTROL AND DISPUTE

In Chapter 2.0, I argued that the impact of political violence on electoral participation and vote choice is a function of armed actors' ideological orientations and their level of control over a particular region. Consequently, for an armed actor to have an impact on electoral politics, it has to reach a hegemonic status in that region. On the other hand, when armed actors are disputing a territory, none of them is in a situation of having an influence on vote choices and political participation is expected to reach its lowest level as consequence of the violent clash between them. Thus, the extent to which a municipality is dominated by guerrillas or by paramilitaries, and the level of dispute between these illegal organizations for a territory, define the different violent contexts in which elections unfold in Colombia. As I attempt to analyze the effect of these violent contexts on political participation and vote choice, one of the major challenges and contributions of my dissertation is the definition of a procedure to capture armed actors' levels of control and dispute for each Colombian municipality between 1988 and 2003. In this chapter I present such an operationalization method.

During the last few years an increasing number of Colombian scholars have gathered quantitative information on political violence, that allows them to measure the intensity of violence using, among other indicators, variables such as homicides, combats, or terrorist attacks (González et al. 2003; Gutiérrez 2006; Sánchez and Chacón 2006). In some cases these data

bases are supported by detailed methodologies developed to distinguish common from political violence (Restrepo et al. 2006);  yet, none of these measuring efforts has come up with an operationalization of political violence in terms of armed actors' territorial control and dispute. Another group of indicators on political violence used by Colombian scholars are measures of guerrilla and paramilitaries' municipal presence. Although these measures allow us to assess armed actors' territorial distribution, they do not allow us to identify the extent to which an armed actor has reached a dominant position in a given municipality or the intensity of the dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries.  Additionally, these indicators are not based on a clear measurement procedure and the few public data bases on armed actors' municipal presence are outdated.[19]

Similarly, among the international literature, most of the analyses of political violence have used measures such as riots, homicides, massacres, intimidation of voters, or perceptions of violence (Collier and Vicente 2008; Elazar 2001; Kalyvas 1999; Krain 1997; Valentino et al. 2004; Weinstein 2007; Wilkinson 2004). An important exception is a recent work by Kalyvas (2006), in which he dealt with the problem of armed actors' territorial control in the context of civil wars. This author envisioned five zones of control ranging from 1 to 5. Zone 1 is an area of total incumbent control, and zone 5 is an area of total insurgent control.  In between, zone 2 is primarily controlled by incumbents, and zone 4 is largely controlled by insurgents, while zone 3 is controlled equally by both sides (Kalyvas 2006: 196). Along with this classification scheme, this author proposed a relationship between zones of control and levels of violence; thus, totally

[19] I identified two sources of information on armed actors' municipal presence. The first one is a series of regional reports on the evolution of political violence published by the office of the Colombian Vice-President. However, these reports only cover a small number of municipalities for a few years. The second source is a database on guerrillas and paramilitaries presence published in the late 1990s by *Fundación Social*. This database has not been updated since its publication, and the measures of armed actors' presence are not desegregated by year as they cover periods of ten years.

controlled zones are significantly less violent than contested areas. Disputed regions are expected to experience the highest levels of political violence.

Following Kalyvas' idea of zones of control, I created a group of variables measuring the local balance of power between guerrillas and paramilitaries at the municipal level. These variables capture, at the municipal level, the extent to which a municipality is dominated by left wing insurgents or by right wing paramilitaries, as well as level of dispute between these armed groups. The first one is an integrated measure of control and dispute. Two other variables measure the level of control exercised in a given municipality by each armed actor. Finally, a fourth variable captures the extent of the dispute between armed actors. These variables were constructed following a somewhat complex procedure that I will describe in the following paragraphs.

Based on a monthly report on political violence published by the Non Governmental Organization *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* (CINEP), I created a municipal level database on violent actions, covering the seven electoral years between 1988 and 2003.[20] This database records, on a daily basis, violent events committed by guerrillas and paramilitaries in all Colombian municipalities. These events were classified into two groups: military actions and violent actions against individuals. The first group included: terrorist acts, attacks against military bases, attacks on public property, attacks on private property, blockages of road, ambushes, combats, piracy, and massacres. Violent actions against individuals included: political homicides, assaults against civilians, political kidnappings, and assaults against public officials. Due to the various types of violent events recorded in my database, it allows me to construct a disaggregated record of political violence. A violent action perpetrated by an armed actor may

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[20] I only recorded information for electoral years due to constraints in time and financial resources.

involve several types of military actions and different forms of violence against individuals. For instance, when a guerrilla group blocks a road it usually burns vehicles (damage to private property) and it takes hostages. Thus, to avoid an overestimation of political violence, I decided to aggregate the information on military actions and violent actions against individuals using the following criterion. I assigned a 1 if a violent event involved at least one type of military action; similarly, I coded 1 a violent event that caused at least one form of violence against civilians. Then I added the two variables; consequently, violent events that involved both military actions and violence against civilians were coded 2 and 1 otherwise.

Based on these data, I produced two annual counts of violent actions committed by guerrillas and paramilitaries in every Colombian municipality for the seven electoral years between 1988 and 2003 (1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2003). Using these variables, the following step was to define a classification procedure capable of discriminating the extent to which a given municipality is controlled by guerrillas or paramilitaries, or if it is disputed by these organizations. One of the major challenges I faced was to create a measure of armed actor's territorial control and dispute based on data related to the intensity of political violence. As Kalyvas (1999, 2006) demonstrated, political violence tends to increase as an armed actor attempts to conquer a region. However, once it controls a territory, the intensity of violence suffers a sharp reduction. Thus assuming that areas with low levels of political violence are those in which armed actors are absent may be misleading. Although it can be the case, it may be also the case that in these regions armed actors consolidated a hegemonic position.

To avoid potential misclassification problems, I decided to take advantage of the geographical and longitudinal character of my dataset on political violence. Thus, using the information on political violence in the surrounding areas of a given municipality and

63

considering each municipality's history of violence, permits the construction of a reliable measure of the extent to which armed actors dispute a municipality, along with guerrilla and paramilitary levels of control. Considering time and space helped me to avoid, as much as possible, misclassifying municipalities that differ in terms of armed actors' levels of control but that appear very similar at a given point in time. For instance, two municipalities may register a very low count of violent actions in a given year. The first is located in a relatively peaceful region and over the years it consistently registers low levels of political violence. In this case, there is no doubt that this municipality is not controlled or disputed by any armed actor. The second municipality also experiences low levels of political violence in that particular year, but previously it experienced high levels of violence. Here low levels of violence at one particular year may be the consequence that guerrillas or paramilitaries finally conquered the region; therefore they do not need to use violence anymore. Similarly, an apparently peaceful town may be surrounded by municipalities affected by high levels of violence; thus, although this municipality appears unaffected by political violence it belongs to a disputed region.

I took account of the geographical dimension of political violence creating a spatially weighted count of both guerrilla and paramilitary violent actions. These variables were created, using GeoDa 0.9.3, multiplying the yearly counts of armed actors' violent activities by a contiguity weight containing information on the neighborhood structure of each municipality (Anselin 2003: 2). This structure was defined using one of two types of contiguity criteria. I used a neighboring structure called "Queen," which creates the contiguity weight considering information from the municipalities sharing a border with a particular location and the municipalities placed in the vertices of that particular location. Based on the spatially weighted

count of violent actions, the next step was to use a procedure, based on longitudinal data, capable of distinguishing municipalities controlled or disputed by the different armed actors.

Psychologists have demonstrated that although several psychological processes describe a common developmental trajectory among a population, there are "large classes of developmental phenomena for which the conception of a common growth process does not naturally fit" (Nagin 2005: 7). For instance, language acquisition is the prototypical example of a process in which population members follow a common pattern. Conversely, the developmental trajectory of depression does not follow a common path for all population members; "many persons will never be high in depression, whereas others will always be high, (…) but others will become increasingly depressed" (Raudenbush 2001: 513). Thus, when working with longitudinal data there is the possibility that individuals or observations fail to follow a common development pattern, instead there may be clusters or subgroups within a population describing distinctive trajectories (Nagin 2005). Following this rationale, Nagin developed a semiparametric group-based modeling approach that recognizes trajectories or paths emerging from longitudinal data. This technique allows the identification of groups within a population on the basis of a formal statistical model rather than on subjective classification rules (Nagin 2005: 15).

Longitudinal data on politically violent events is a clear case in which observations do not follow a common pattern. In several municipalities, the incidence of armed actors' violent actions is almost zero. However, some other municipalities register high levels of political violence, while others will experience and increase or decrease in armed actors' violent actions. Thus by identifying the different trajectories described by my data on violent events, I am able to develop an evaluation of armed actors' territorial control and dispute. For instance, if a municipality belongs to a subgroup of municipalities in which guerrilla actions are high and it

also belongs to a subset of townships were paramilitaries perpetrate a lot of violence, that municipality may be considered a disputed area. On the other hand, a township might be considered dominated by paramilitaries if guerrillas consistently perpetrate few violent actions and paramilitaries start perpetrating several violent acts and then decrease their violent activities.

Using Nagin's approach, I identified distinctive trajectories described by the violent actions committed both by guerrillas and paramilitaries. In other words, I was able to distinguish clusters of municipalities in which violent actions perpetrated by guerrillas and paramilitaries followed significantly different patterns.

Six semi-parametric group-based models were estimated. The first two models, one for guerrillas and one for paramilitaries, were based on information from the first two electoral years covered by my data (1988 and1990). The second set of models was based on violent events perpetrated by guerrillas and paramilitaries in 1992, 1994 and 1997. The last two models, one for each armed actor, used information on political violence from the last three time points included in my database (1997, 2000 and 2003). All models were estimated using a SAS based routine called PROC TRAJ  developed by Jones, Nagin and Roeder (2001).  I decided to split my data on violent actions into three time periods for various reasons. First, using three time periods I was able to capture changes in armed actors' levels of control and dispute still using Nagin's longitudinal approach. This is crucial because I can hardly assume that in the 15 years between 1988 an 2003 guerrillas or paramilitaries degree of territorial control remained the same. Second, the dynamics of the confrontation between guerrilla and paramilitaries suffered radical changes in the early and late 1990s that needed to be captured by the operationalization of armed actors' territorial control and dispute. For instance, in 1997 paramilitaries launched a national offensive that transformed the balance of power between guerrillas and paramilitaries in several regions of

66

Colombia. Finally, the best model fit was obtained from models based on violence data from the three time periods described above.

The estimation of semi-parametric group-based models requires identifying the optimal number of trajectories and their shape. Several models with two, three, and four groups, as well as models combining linear, quadratic and cubic trajectories were estimated. In the following paragraphs I will describe the final models.

The first two models used information on guerrilla and paramilitaries violent actions from 1988 and 1990, and both contained two trajectories. For the model based on paramilitary actions those trajectories were estimated as a flat path and as a linear function. In the model using guerrilla actions both trajectories were modeled as linear functions. The second set of models used information on violent actions from 1992, 1994, and 1997. In this case the model for paramilitary actions included three paths. One was estimated as a flat trajectory and the other two as quadratic functions. The model using guerrilla actions included four trajectories; two were modeled as linear functions and two as quadratic curves. Finally, models based on violence data from 1997, 2000, and 2003 have the following characteristics. Both guerrilla and paramilitaries' models included four trajectories. In the case of guerrilla actions, all four groups were modeled as quadratic curves; for paramilitaries' violence, one group was modeled as a flat trajectory and the remaining groups as quadratic lines. The paths obtained from the six semi-parametric group-based models are depicted in Figures 2, 3 and 4. Solid lines represent the trajectories of paramilitary violence and dotted lines represent guerrillas' actions paths. Under the graphs, the number in parentheses indicates the percentage of municipalities included in each trajectory. Parameter estimates and model fit measures are presented in Appendix B.
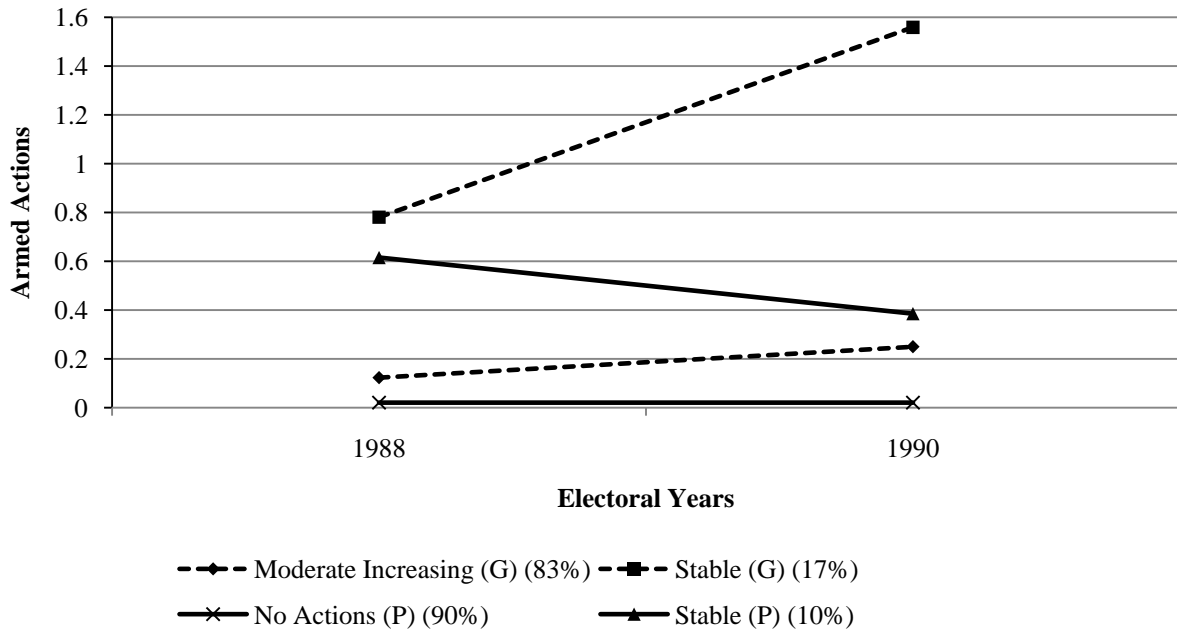
**Figure 2: Trajectories of Paramilitary and Guerrilla Violence, 1988-1990**
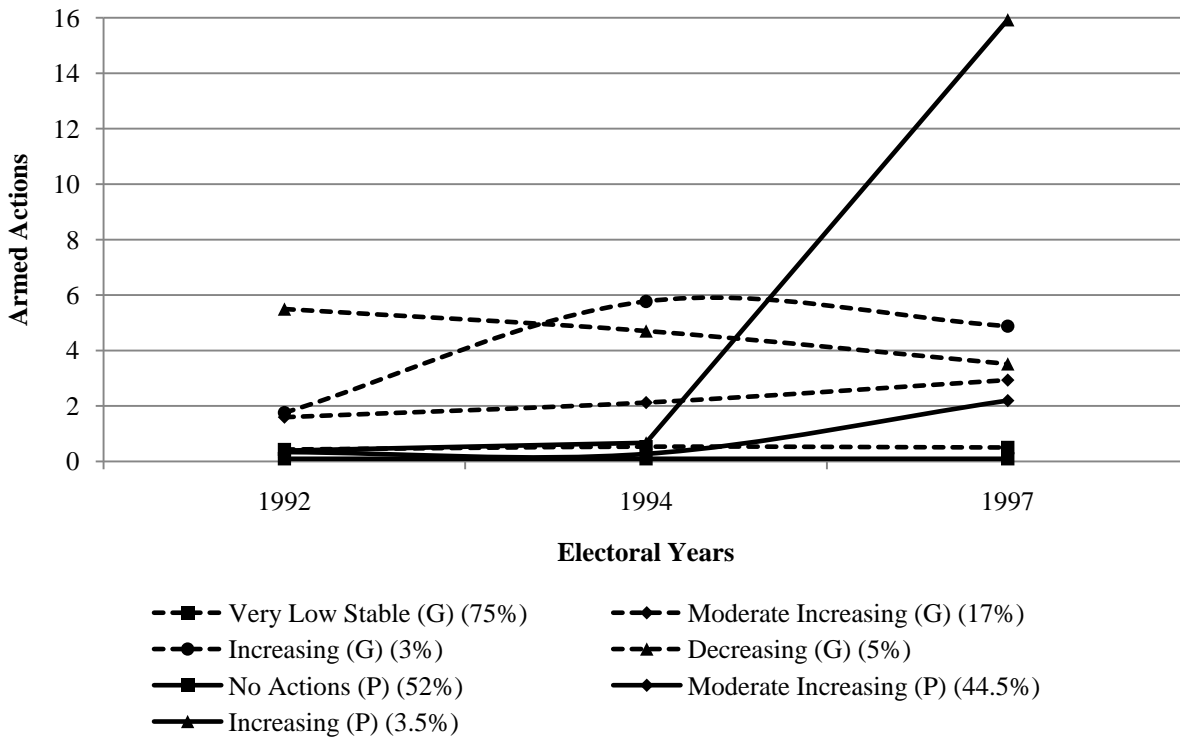


**Figure 3: Trajectories of Paramilitary and Guerrilla Violence, 1992-1997**

| | |
|---|---|
| —●— Very Low Stable (P) 76% | —▲— Moderate Decreasing (P) 20% |
| —■— Increasing (P) 1.6% | —◆— Decreasing (P) 2.4% |
| --●-- Very Low Stable (G) 56% | --▲-- Low Stable (G) 30% |
| --■-- Moderate Decreasing (G) 12% | --◆-- High Increasing - Decreasing (G) 2% |
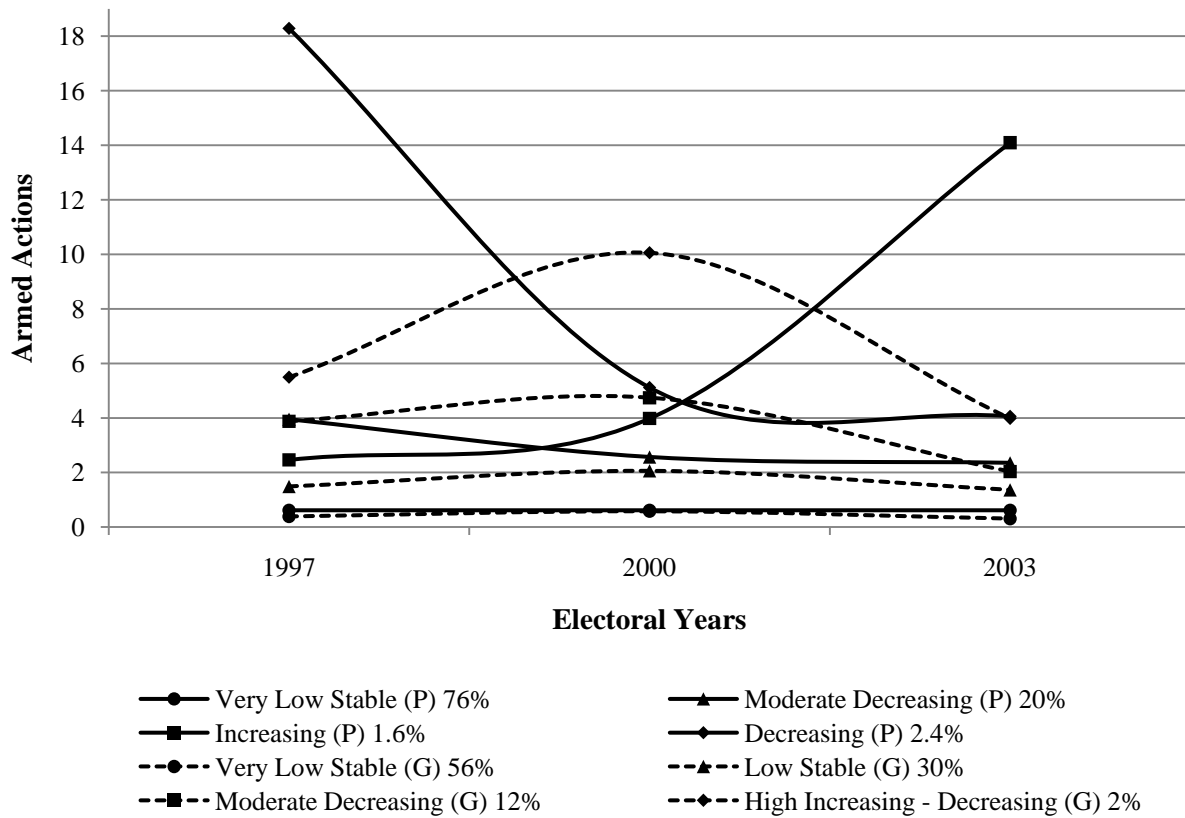
**Figure 4: Trajectories of Paramilitary and Guerrilla Violence, 1997-2003**

Graphs displaying armed actors trajectories allow me to capture the evolution of armed actions and the confrontation between guerrillas and paramilitaries. Figure 2 describes a phase of very low violent events; paramilitaries were practically inactive during this period. In fact, as I described in the previous chapter, in the late 1980s this organization was active only in a few Colombian municipalities. For the period 1992 – 1997, Figure 3 shows that guerrilla actions describe not only various paths but also very different in terms of number of actions. Thus, there are clusters of municipalities in which this armed actor is almost inactive and in other cases guerrillas increase their actions. In the case of paramilitary actions, there is an important group of municipalities (52%) in which this organization is inactive. However, the other two paths

describe a significant increase in actions as we move from 1992 to 1997. These paths, particularly the "Increasing" trajectory, reflect the beginning of the paramilitary offensive that that started around 1997. Finally, Figure 4 shows a period of more violent activity, probably as a consequence of a nationwide dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries. Guerrilla violence continues describing four paths and paramilitary action trajectories increased compared to the previous period. Two paramilitary trajectories deserve some attention. The "Decreasing" group describes municipalities that at the beginning of the period experienced a extreme amount of paramilitary violence and then it decreased to moderate levels. These may be areas in which paramilitaries consolidated their presence after exercising tremendous amounts of violence. On the other hand, the "Increasing" trajectory describes municipalities in which the paramilitary offensive was launched in the early 2000s.

By crossing paramilitary and guerrilla trajectories, I created an integrated measure of control and dispute (*Guerrillas v. Paramilitaries*) that goes from -4 to 4. Tables 1 to 3 display the scenarios of dispute and control resulting from the intersection between guerrilla and paramilitary trajectories for the three periods of time described above. Municipalities in which both guerrilla and paramilitary actions described paths identified as "No Actions" or "Very Low Stable" were considered to be areas controlled by the Colombia state or regions not affected by the armed conflict. In tables 1 to 3 the cells labeled as "No Conflict" identify these types of municipalities which receive a numeric value of zero (0).

Disputed municipalities resulted from the intersection of paths in which guerrilla and paramilitary actions described very similar and close trajectories, but unlike municipalities in which there is no conflict, here both guerrillas and paramilitaries are committing acts of violence. Similarly, when two paths crossed there was a situation of dispute; for instance, the intersection

70

between increasing and decreasing trajectories, or between increasing and stable paths. Previous studies have showed that contested areas are characterized by a situation in which the challenging armed actor enters a region perpetrating an elevated number of violent actions, in an attempt to overwhelm its enemy (Kalyvas 2006). So when an armed actor suddenly increases its violent activities to the level of its contender and then surpasses it, there is a situation of dispute. In tables 1, 2 and 3, cells labeled as "Dispute" identify situations described above. Disputed municipalities where coded -1 when guerrillas showed a slight advantage over paramilitaries and 1 when paramilitaries were the armed actor having a minor advantage.

Towns controlled by insurgents resulted when the guerrilla actions' path was clearly above paramilitary's trajectory for the whole period of analysis. The same logic was used to identify municipalities dominated by right- wing paramilitaries. For instance, for the period 1997 – 2003 (Figure 4, Table 3), municipalities in which there was an intersection between guerrillas' "High Increasing-Decreasing" path and paramilitaries' "Very Low Stable" trajectory were considered under insurgent control. In this case while guerrillas actions ranged from 4 to 10 paramilitaries did not committed any violent action, so guerrillas were in a dominant position. A somewhat different example of control, in this case of paramilitary dominance, was captured, for the same period (Figure 4, Table 3), by the intersection between paramilitaries' "Decreasing" path and guerrillas' "Low Stable" trajectory. Municipalities in which these two trajectories coexisted represent a scenario in which although guerrillas are active, they are overpowered by paramilitaries. Another element that distinguishes this scenario is that paramilitaries reduce their violent actions, probably because they consolidated their control; yet, they continue overpowering guerrillas. At last, to distinguish different levels of control, as the distance between armed actors' trajectories increased a higher number was assigned to the case. Thus, values from

71

-4 to -2 represent different levels of guerrilla control; scores from 2 to 4 describe various degrees of paramilitary hegemony.

**Table 1: Scenarios of Guerrilla and Paramilitary Control and Dispute, 1988 – 1990**

| | | Guerrillas' Trajectories | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | *Moderate Increasing* | *Stable* |
| Paramilitaries' Trajectories | *No Actions* | No Conflict (0) | Guerrilla (-2) |
| | *Stable* | No Conflict (0) | Guerrilla (-2) |

**Table 2: Scenarios of Guerrilla and Paramilitary Control and Dispute, 1992 – 1997**

| | | Guerrillas' Trajectories | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | *Very Low Stable* | *Moderate Increasing* | *Increasing* | *Decreasing* |
| Paramilitaries' Trajectories | *No Actions* | No Conflict (0) | Guerilla (-2) | Guerrilla (-2) | Guerilla (-3) |
| | *Moderate Increasing* | Dispute (1) | Dispute (-1) | Guerrilla (-3) | Guerrilla (-3) |
| | *Increasing* | Paramilitaries (2) | Paramilitaries (2) | Dispute (-1) | Dispute (-1) |

**Table 3: Scenarios of Guerrilla and Paramilitary Control and Dispute, 1997 – 2003**

| | | Guerrillas' Trajectories | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | *Very Low Stable* | *Low Stable* | *Moderate Decreasing* | *High Increasing - Decreasing* |
| Paramilitaries' Trajectories | *Very Low Stable* | No Conflict (0) | Guerrilla (-2) | Guerrilla (3) | Guerrilla (-4) |
| | *Moderate Decreasing* | Paramilitaries (2) | Paramilitaries (2) | Dispute (-1) | Guerrilla (-3) |
| | *Increasing* | Paramilitaries (4) | Paramilitaries (3) | Dispute (1) | Dispute (1) |
| | *Decreasing* | Paramilitaries (4) | Paramilitaries (3) | Paramilitaries (2) | Dispute (1) |

Finally, I divided the integrated measure of control and dispute (*Guerrillas v. Paramilitaries*) into three variables, one capturing *paramilitary control*, another measuring *guerrilla control*, and the last one capturing *dispute*. These variables are coded in a 0 to 3 scale in which 0 represents no control or dispute and 3 represents the highest level of control or dispute.

Using the scenarios of armed actors control and dispute captured by the operationalization procedure described in this chapter, the following chapters will present an empirical test of the impact of armed actors' territorial control and dispute on political participation and vote choices. First, I will test this relationship at the individual level and then I will analyze it at the municipal level.

# 5.0 VIOLENT CONTEXTS, ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION, AND VOTE CHOICE. AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL APPROACH

What is the effect of violent contexts on the political behavior of individuals? This chapter attempts to answer this question by developing an empirical test of the relationship between guerrilla and paramilitary municipal level of control and the magnitude of territorial dispute on citizens' chances of voting and on their vote choices. In Chapter 2.0, I argued that individuals living under a violent context tend to adjust their political behavior in line with the strategic objectives and ideological orientations proclaimed by the armed actor dominating the area. Thus, the impact of a violent context on citizens' political behavior is a function of armed actors' level of territorial control and their strategic objectives. Following this general argument I proposed several hypotheses. First, as an armed actor consolidates its control over a particular region, people chances of voting are expected to significantly decrease. However, the individual probability of voting reaches its lowest level areas disputed by the armed actors. Second, as a single armed actor consolidates its control over a particular region, citizens will be more likely to vote for those candidates and parties backed by the dominant armed actor. In contrast, in disputed contexts armed actors are not expected to affect citizens' political preferences. Finally, I also argued that the effect of violent contexts on political behavior is moderated by citizen's partisan identity. Particularly, I expect minority party sympathizers to be more affected by the violent context than members of majority parties.

In this chapter, I will test the previous hypotheses through a series of hierarchical regression models, which allow me to evaluate the effect of contextual factors on individual behavior, while controlling for the effect of individual level variables.

## 5.1  DATA AND METHODS

Individual level data used in this chapter comes from a national survey conducted in Colombia in 2005 by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) of Vanderbilt University. This survey is divided into two samples. The first one is a nationally representative sample of 1,487 adults from 48 municipalities covering all of Colombia's geographical regions (Bogotá, Atlantic, Pacific, Central, Western and the former National Territories). The second one is a sample of 1,596 adults, representative of regions affected by the armed conflict. The latter sample interviewed individuals from 28 municipalities. Both samples applied the same questionnaire. In short, the LAPOP study conducted in 2005, interviewed 3,083 adults from 76 Colombian municipalities.  In this chapter I also use contextual level data on political violence and socioeconomic factors for the 76 municipalities included in the survey. Data on political violence includes measures, at the municipal level, of armed actors' levels of control and dispute presented in the previous chapter. Using the municipal level data on armed actors' military balance and other contextual factors, this chapter will be based on a hierarchical data structure, as I have information on individual level variables (level-1) and municipal level factors (level-2).

### 5.1.1 Variables

This chapter deals with two types of dependent variables: vote and vote intention. *Vote* is a dichotomous variable measuring whether or not an individual participated in the 2003 local elections. Vote is coded so that one is equal to vote and zero to non vote. *Vote intention* measures whether or not an individual was planning to vote for the incumbent in the 2006 presidential elections. Vote intention is coded so that one is equal to vote intention for President Álvaro Uribe and zero is equal to vote intention for any other candidate. This variable allows me to test the effect of violent contexts on a vote choice representing a somehow extreme ideological position. President Uribe embodies the current "status-quo" and the most conservative segments of the Liberal and Conservative Parties.[21] Additionally, several members of President Uribe's congressional coalition have been involved in political pacts or negotiations with paramilitary groups.[22]

The main independent variables used in this chapter are a group of contextual measures capturing armed actors' municipal level of control and the magnitude of territorial dispute. These variables are *paramilitary control*, *guerrilla control*, and *dispute*. They were coded in a 0 to 3 scale in which 0 represents no control or dispute and 3 represents the highest level of control or dispute. A detailed description of the operationalization procedure that produced these variables was presented in Chapter 4.0. In addition to the contextual variables capturing the different scenarios of military balance, my analysis controls for the impact of other contextual and individual level variables on political behavior. Contextual economic conditions have been found

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[21] Alvaro Uribe himself has been recognized as one of the most conservative members of the Liberal party. His cabinet and congressional coalition is made up of the majority of the Conservative Party and the growing right wing segments of the Liberal party.

[22] 57 members of Uribe's congressional coalition have been investigated or judged for their political links to paramilitary groups.

to have a strong influence on individuals' political participation (Giles and Dantico 1982; Huckfeldt 1979; Kenny 1992; Leighley 1990; Mondak et al. 1996). Thus, to account for the effect of this environmental factor, I include in my analysis of voting a poverty measure known as Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN) index. This variable identifies the proportion of households having one or more unsatisfied basic needs (Feres and Mancero 2001). This variable was measured in a 0 to 100 scale, in which higher values represent an elevated level of poverty.[23]

In the case of the effect of violent contexts on vote intention, one could make the argument that armed actors move to places where the population already shares their political preferences, therefore the relationship between armed actors' presence and individuals' vote choice may be endogenous. To control for this option, I created a variable capturing contextual ideological preferences. Using local electoral results from 1988 to 2003, I coded every winning party using a 1 to 5 scale. Left-wing parties were coded 1, while right wing parties were assigned a 5. Then I created a score capturing each municipality's average ideological preferences between 1988 and 2003, so low scores indicate consistent support for left wing parties in local elections, while high scores show regular support for the right.

Since the hierarchical structure of my data allow me to control for the effects of individual level variables, I include in my analyses several individual level factors that the literature on political behavior has found to have an impact on participation and vote choice. These variables are: age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, system support, external political efficacy, political sophistication, political engagement, party identification, and sociotropic evaluations of the economy. A detailed description of these variables is presented in Appendix C. Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics.

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[23] The basic needs considered by the index are: adequate living space, adequate provision of utilities, number of persons per room, household income, and household members' level of education (controlled by age).

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics**

| Name | $N$ | Mean | Standard deviation | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Dependent variables* | | | | | |
| Vote | 3055 | 0.60 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| Vote intention for the Incumbent | 2972 | 0.71 | 0.46 | 0 | 1 |
| *Level-2 Independent Variables* | | | | | |
| Guerrilla Control | 75 | 0.40 | 0.64 | 0 | 3 |
| Paramilitary Control | 75 | 0.36 | 0.80 | 0 | 3 |
| Dispute | 75 | 0.16 | 0.49 | 0 | 3 |
| Guerrilla V. Paramilitary | 75 | -0.43 | 1.55 | -4 | 3 |
| Poverty (UBN) | 75 | 40.40 | 23.84 | 9.96 | 100 |
| Ideology | 75 | 3.21 | 0.43 | 1.83 | 4.29 |
| *Level-1 Independent Variables* | | | | | |
| Education | 3063 | 8.05 | 4.37 | 0 | 18 |
| Age | 2859 | 36.57 | 14.10 | 18 | 86 |
| Age (2003) | 3065 | 35.80 | 13.73 | 18 | 84 |
| System support | 2983 | 59.65 | 20.76 | 0 | 100 |
| Gender (male) | 3065 | 0.49 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 |
| Socioeconomic status | 3065 | 47.25 | 21.58 | 0 | 100 |
| External efficacy | 2936 | 0.55 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 |
| Sophistication | 3065 | 46.13 | 27.25 | 0 | 100 |
| Party ID (traditional) | 2984 | 0.49 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 |
| Current sociotropic eval. | 3049 | 39.81 | 20.30 | 0 | 100 |
| Prospective sociotropic eval | 2891 | 42.44 | 37.65 | 0 | 100 |
| Political engagement | 3038 | 10.46 | 22.60 | 0 | 100 |
| Ideology | 2489 | 64.71 | 27.32 | 0 | 100 |

## 5.1.2 Analytical Strategy

To analyze the impact of violent contexts on political behavior in Colombia, I estimated a series of hierarchical models, with vote and vote intention modeled at level-1 nested within municipalities at level-2. These estimations were conducted in HLM 6.06. Vote and vote intention were modeled using a two-level model for binary outcomes.[24] For each of the

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[24] The HLM model for binary outcomes uses a binomial sampling model and a logit link function (Raundenbush and Byrk 2002; 294).

dependent variables I estimated two types of HLM models: the *fully unconditional model* and the *conditional model*.

The *fully unconditional model* predicts the dependent variable within each level-1 unit with just one level-2 parameter, the intercept $\beta_{0j}$, where the intercept is the mean outcome for the *j*th unit. In addition, it provides information about the outcome variability at each of the two levels (within-municipalities and between-municipalities). The variance components represent the within-group variability ($\sigma^2$) and the between-group variability ($\tau_{00}$). By comparing the variance components this model allows me to gauge how much variability in the dependent variable is attributable to municipalities versus individuals and provides information on whether or not contextual level factors must be considered to model the outcome (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002 : 23).

For binary outcomes, the level-1 equation for the unconditional model is:

$$\eta_{ij} = \log\left(\frac{\varphi_{ij}}{1 - \varphi_{ij}}\right)$$

$$\eta_{ij} = \beta_{0j}$$

and the level-2 equation is: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}$ ; $u_{0j} \sim N(0, \tau_{00})$. Where $\gamma_{00}$ is the average log-odds of occurrence of, for instance, voting in local elections across municipalities, $\tau_{00}$ is the variance between municipalities in municipality-average log-odds of the outcome variable and $u_{0j}$ represents the random effect associated with unit *j* (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002:297).

Having estimated the outcome variability at each of the two levels, the next step will be to build an explanatory model to account for this variability. The *conditional model* will take into account level-1 and level-2 predictors, and it attempts to understand why some municipalities have higher outcome means than others, and why in some municipalities the relationship

between the level-1 predictors and the outcome variable is stronger than in others. In this model, the units at level-1 are individuals and each person's outcome is a function of individual characteristics. At level-2 the units are municipalities and the regression intercept (the mean outcome) or the level-1 slopes are conceived as the dependent variables that are hypothesized to depend on certain contextual factors (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002).[25]

In this chapter I will estimate two types of *conditional models.* First, I begin by modeling only the intercepts (*intercepts-as-outcomes model*). This will allow me to know whether different violent contexts predict significant differences in mean vote and mean vote intention, which is my main theoretical interest. Then I will model both intercepts and level-1 slopes (*intercepts-and slopes-as-outcomes model*). By predicting the level-1 slopes using contextual variables, I will be able to discover whether the strength of the associations between contextual level factors and the outcome variables changes at different levels of the individual variables. In other words, I will try to identify which individuals are more affected by violent contexts and which are more resistant to environmental influences.

As argued in Chapter 2.0, I expect violent contexts to have a stronger effect on political participation and vote choices among sympathizers of minority parties, than among militants of majority parties. However, because my theory does not focus on how municipal-level factors affect other individual predictors of vote and vote intention, I will model additional level-1 slopes following a somewhat inductive approach. Although, I could model every slope using all contextual variables, multiple cross-level interactions can introduce into the models problems such as loss of efficiency in parameter estimation (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). Therefore, I

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[25] These types of models are also known as Intercepts-as-Outcomes models.

opted for a more parsimonious approach consisting in modeling the slopes using only those contextual variables with *t*-statistics greater than 1.50.[26]

In all HLM conditional models the continuous independent variables will be centered on the grand mean and the dummy variables will be included uncentered. By centering the variables in this way, models' intercepts represent the average log-odds of certain event or the average value of the dependent variable, when the continuous variables take their mean values and the dummy variables are equal to zero.

## 5.2    RESULTS

This section presents results from two sets of hierarchical models dealing with the effects of violent contexts on political behavior. The first subsection focuses on electoral participation and the second one deals with vote intention.

### 5.2.1   Electoral Participation Models.

The first column in Table 5 displays the results for the fully unconditional model of voting. The intercept coefficient $\gamma_{00}$ shows the average log-odds of voting across municipalities, which corresponds to a probability of voting of approximately .62.[27] In addition, a significant intercept indicates that individuals were found to vary significantly around their municipal means. Taking into account the intercept coefficient (the mean) and the municipal level variance $\tau_{00}$, I found that

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[26] Lee and Bryk (1989) and Weld (2006) follow a similar estimation strategy when working with cross-level interactions.
[27] Using the odds ratio (OR) I estimated the probability (*p*) using the following formula: $p = OR/(1+OR)$.

95% of the municipalities lie between .42 and .79 with respect to the average probability of voting in local elections.[28] In sum, the fully unconditional model suggests that there is a statistically significant variation in the probability of voting that may be associated with municipal or contextual level factors.

The first conditional model for voting in the 2003 local elections includes individual level variables and models the level-1 intercept using four contextual variables: *guerrilla control*, *paramilitary control*, *dispute* and *poverty* (UBN). Its functional form is the following.

For the dependent variable vote the level-1 equation is:

$\eta_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} \text{(Education)}_{ij} + \beta_{2j} \text{(Age)}_{ij} + \beta_{3j} \text{(System support)}_{ij} + \beta_{4j} \text{(Gender)}_{ij} + \beta_{5j} \text{(SES)}_{ij}$

$+ \beta_{6j} \text{(External efficacy)}_{ij} + \beta_{7j} \text{(Sophistication)}_{ij} + \beta_{8j} \text{(Traditional Party ID)}_{ij} +$

$\beta_{9j} \text{(Political Engagement)}_{ij}$,

and the level-2 model is:

$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \text{(Guerrilla Control)}_j + \gamma_{02} \text{(Paramilitary Control)}_j + \gamma_{03} \text{(Dispute)}_j + \gamma_{04} \text{(UBN)}_j + u_{0j}$

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[28] To obtain this interval, first I estimated the log-odds interval using the following formula: $\gamma_{00} \pm \left(1.96 * \sqrt{\tau_{00}}\right)$. Then I transformed the log-odds interval into an odds ratio interval (OR = exp$^{[\text{log-odds}]}$), and finally into a probabilities interval using the formula presented in foot note 25.

### Table 5: HLM Models of Vote in Local Elections

| Fixed Effects | Model 1 Fully Unconditional Coefficient (Robust SE) | | Model 2 Conditional Coefficient (Robust SE) | | Model 3 Conditional Cross-level Interactions Coefficient (Robust SE) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Level-2 predictors** | | | | | | |
| Intercept $\gamma00$ | 0,488 | *** | 0,402 | *** | 0,388 | *** |
| | (0.064) | | (0.102) | | (0.091) | |
| Guerrilla Control $\gamma01$ | | | -0,040 | | -0,061 | |
| | | | (0.111) | | (0.109) | |
| Paramilitary Control $\gamma02$ | | | -0,181 | * | -0,189 | ** |
| | | | (0.071) | | (0.071) | |
| Dispute $\gamma03$ | | | -0,232 | * | -0,436 | *** |
| | | | (0.094) | | (0.091) | |
| Poverty (UBN) $\gamma04$ | | | 0,009 | ** | 0,009 | ** |
| | | | (0.003) | | (0.003) | |
| **Level-1 predictors** | | | | | | |
| Education $\gamma10$ | | | 0,062 | *** | 0,063 | *** |
| | | | (0.014) | | (0.013) | |
| Age $\gamma20$ | | | 0,024 | *** | 0,024 | *** |
| | | | (0.003) | | (0.003) | |
| System Support $\gamma30$ | | | -0,001 | | -0,001 | |
| | | | (0.002) | | (0.002) | |
|   Dispute $\gamma31$ | | | | | 0.010 | * |
| | | | | | (0.005) | |
| Gender $\gamma40$ | | | 0,026 | | 0,022 | |
| | | | (0.105) | | (0.105) | |
| Socioeconomic Status $\gamma50$ | | | 0,001 | | 0.000 | |
| | | | (0.003) | | (0.003) | |
| Ext. Efficacy $\gamma60$ | | | 0,228 | ** | 0,242 | ** |
| | | | (0.079) | | (0.080) | |
| Sophistication $\gamma70$ | | | 0,001 | | 0,001 | |
| | | | (0.002) | | (0.002) | |
| Party ID (Traditional) $\gamma80$ | | | 0,436 | *** | 0,457 | *** |
| | | | (0.097) | | (0.092) | |
|   Dispute $\gamma31$ | | | | | 0,406 | ** |
| | | | | | (0.135) | |
| Political Engagement $\gamma90$ | | | 0,020 | *** | 0,021 | *** |
| | | | (0.003) | | (0.003) | |
|   Poverty (UBN) $\gamma91$ | | | | | 0.000 | * |
| | | | | | (0.000) | |
| **Random Effects Variance Components** | | | | | | |
| Municipal level effect $\tau00$ | 0,177 | *** | 0,135 | *** | 0,106 | *** |
| Individual level effect $\sigma2$ | 0,421 | | 0,367 | | 0,326 | |
| Reliability of intercept | 0,56 | | 0,43 | | 0,38 | |
| Percentage explained† | | | 24 | | 40 | |

\* p < .05; \*\* p <. 01; \*\*\* p < .001

† Between municipalities variance in voting accounted for by level-2 variables

Following the literature on political participation, I expect that individuals with higher socioeconomic and intellectual resources will have a higher probability of voting than their poorer, less educated, and less sophisticated counterparts (Brady et al. 1995; Plutzer 2002; Verba and Nie 1972; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rosenstone 1982). Similarly, the chance to vote is expected to be high among citizens with a sense of external efficacy, engaged in politics, and for those who believe in the legitimacy of the state (Finkel 1985; Ragsdale and Rusk 1993; Seligson 2002). I also expect a positive effect of being a Liberal or Conservative party identifier on voting, as these parties are very efficient organizations in mobilizing their electorates to vote.

According to the contextual theory presented in Chapter 2.0, I expect voting rates to decrease as guerrillas and paramilitaries increase their control levels. However, municipalities *disputed* by the competing armed actors are expected to have the lowest voting rates. Finally, I expect poorer municipalities to have higher voting rates than richer ones. Unlike the American literature on contextual effects, in a previous analysis I found that poverty was positively related to electoral turnout (García 2006), probably as a consequence of the prevalence of clientelistic networks in poorer municipalities and the ability of these networks to mobilize the electorate to vote (Leal and Dávila 1990).

The conditional model for voting (Model 2, Table 5) indicates that, among the municipal level variables, the log-odds of voting are negatively related to *paramilitary control* and *dispute* and positive related to *poverty (UBN)*. They are not significantly related to *guerrilla control*. Results indicate that as paramilitaries increase their level of control over a region, there is a significant decline in voting rates. Still, in contexts in which both armed actors are competing, as dispute increases voting rates suffered the biggest reduction. Figure 5 shows a comparison

between predicted probabilities of voting, for these two scenarios.[29] In municipalities where there is no paramilitary control, the average probability of voting is expected to be .59; as paramilitaries reach a high level of control it drops to .49. This probability goes from .59 to .43 as we move from no dispute to its highest level.

As I expected, electoral participation reached its lowest level in contested municipalities. There is no doubt that contestation makes it difficult for most individuals to align with a single political actor, because there is a high risk of suffering violent retaliations. In these areas, people abstain from voting as mechanism to protect them from political violence. Similarly, politicians are less willing to participate in elections, political competition may be very low and there will be almost no mobilization efforts, stimulating a reduction in electoral participation. I was also expecting areas controlled by a single armed actor to have a significant reduction in the log-odds of voting; however my model only supports this expectation for paramilitary controlled municipalities. This indicates that paramilitaries are having a stronger impact on electoral politics than guerrillas. In fact during the last decade paramilitaries were very efficient increasing their influence in local and national politics, by developing alliances with politicians and attacking left wing militants. Thus, as paramilitaries increase their control over a region, they promote certain candidates and stimulate the reduction of political competition, creating a politically homogeneous context that fosters electoral abstention. On the contrary, results suggest that, at least in 2003, guerrillas failed or did not set in motion a strategy of blocking elections.

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[29] Predicted probabilities were estimated in HLM holding other predictors equal to zero.
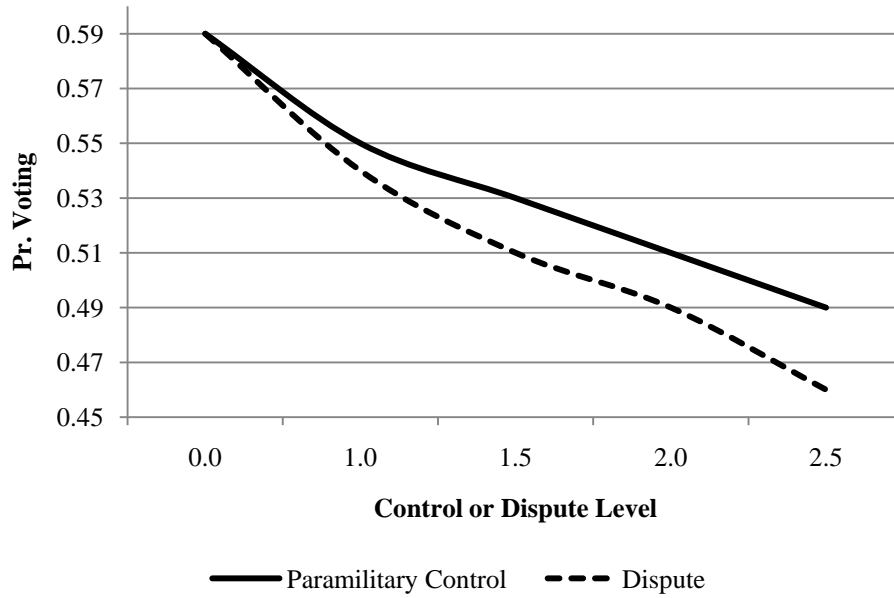
**Figure 5: Effect of Paramilitary Control and Dispute on the Predicted Probabilities of**

**Voting**

Results also support the hypothesis that poorer municipalities have higher voting rates than their richer counterparts. Municipalities with poverty levels one standard deviation below the mean are expected to have an average probability of voting equal to .64; this probability increases to .72 for municipalities having poverty levels one standard deviation above the mean.

Comparing level-2 variance components ($\tau_{00}$) from the unconditional and the conditional models, there is a reduction of $\tau_{00}$ from 0.177 to 0.135.[30] In other words, about 24% of the total between-municipalities variance in log-odds of voting in local elections is accounted for by the level-2 variables included in the conditional model. This suggest that other contextual level factors not considered here should have an influence on voting; however some of the level-2 variables included in this model do have a significant effect on the outcome variable.

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[30] The percentage of variance between municipalities is expressed formally as:
Variance explained = $\tau_{00}$(fully unconditional) - $\tau_{00}$(conditional model) / $\tau_{00}$(fully unconditional).

Regarding the individual level controls, results are consistent with some general findings of the literature on electoral participation. My model indicated a significant and positive effect of *education*, *age*, *external efficacy*, *party identification* and *political engagement* on the probability of voting in local elections. However, results suggested that there was no relationship between the average probability of voting and *system support*, *gender*, *socioeconomic status*, and *political sophistication*. These results show that "intellectual" and "psychological" variables have a key role explaining electoral participation, as education, external efficacy, partisanship, and a direct involvement in local political activities are factors that seem to drive local vote in Colombia. In addition, the significant effect on voting of identification with the traditional parties not only suggests that having a traditional partisan identification eases the political decision making process stimulating electoral participation, but it also indicates that the Liberal and Conservative parties may be very efficient mobilizing their electorates to vote.

After analyzing the direct effect of violent contexts on electoral participation, I also explored to what extent the strength of the associations between individual level factors and vote are affected by differences in violent contexts. As mentioned before, "interactions" between level-1 and level-2 variables can be captured modeling the level-1 slopes using contextual factors. Most of the contextual level variables resulted in $t$-statistic values less than 1.50, so the final model included cross-level interactions for only three individual level variables. The equations for the cross-level interactions are:

$\beta_{3j} = \gamma_{30} + \gamma_{31} (\text{Dispute})_j$

$\beta_{8j} = \gamma_{80} + \gamma_{81} (\text{Dispute})_j$

$\beta_{9j} = \gamma_{90} + \gamma_{94} (\text{UBN})_j$

$\beta_{kj} = \gamma_k$

Where $\gamma_{30}$ is the intercept for the *system support* slope, and $\gamma_{31}$ is the effect of *dispute*. $\gamma_{80}$ is the intercept for the *traditional party ID* slope, and $\gamma_{81}$ is the effect of *dispute*. $\gamma_{90}$ is the intercept for the *political engagement* and $\gamma_{91}$ is the effect of *poverty*. Finally, $\gamma_k$ are the remaining intercepts, for the individual level variables which did not have significantly different effects across violent contexts.

Results from the conditional model with cross-level interactions (Column 3, Table 5), confirm the direct effects of the contextual variables on voting. Thus, the log-odds of voting are negative related to *paramilitary control* and d*ispute*, positive related to *poverty*, and unrelated to *guerrilla control*. In the same way, the effects of the individual level variables on the probability of voting were found to be similar to those presented in the previous model. However, the last HLM model of voting indicates that the effects of *dispute* and *poverty* on the log-odds of voting are conditioned by *system support*, *partisanship* and *political engagement*.

First of all, these results indicate that only one of my hypotheses about the mediating effect of partisanship has empirical support. Thus, as the level of dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries increases there is a significant reduction in the probability of voting, particularly among identifiers of independent and leftist parties. The cross-level interaction between *party ID* and *dispute* suggests that individuals who identified themselves with the Liberal and Conservative (traditional) parties are expected to have a higher probability of voting than identifiers of other parties. However, it also evidences that the effect of the dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries on the average probability of voting significantly differs for traditional parties identifiers versus identifiers of other political parties. Figure 6 shows that, individuals who belong to the former group are practically not affected by changes in the level of dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries. On the contrary, the average probability of voting

for identifiers of non-traditional parties is expected to decrease by almost 30 points (from .59 to .30) as we move from contexts in which there is no clash between guerrillas and paramilitaries, to areas in which armed actors reach the highest level of dispute.
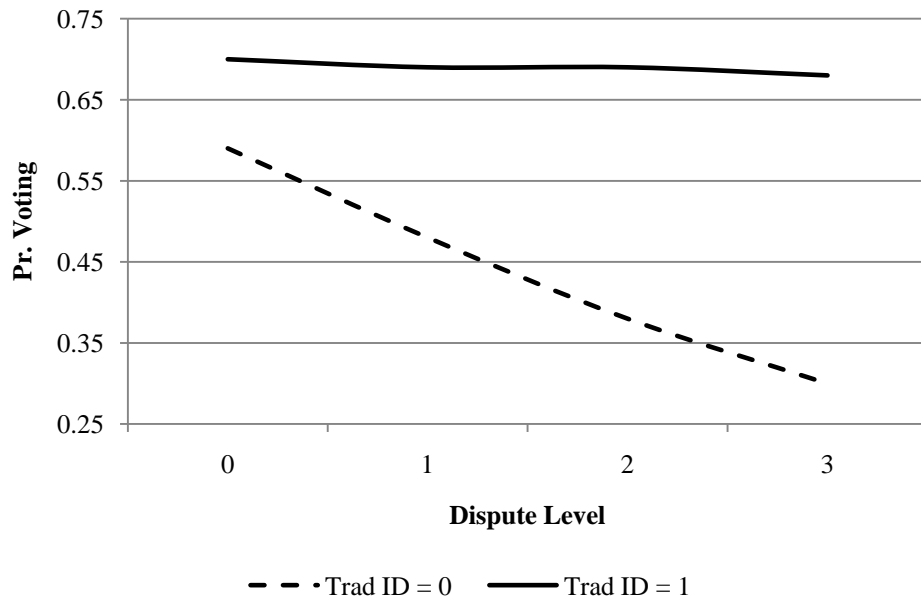


**Figure 6: Effect of Dispute on the Predicted Probability of Voting, Traditional Parties Identifiers v. Identifiers of Other Parties**

What makes traditional parties' identifiers resistant to the effect of a context characterized by a dispute between both armed actors? A possible answer to this question is that violence against militants of the Liberal and Conservative parties is not as common as violence against militants of other parties, particularly members of leftist parties. Although both paramilitaries and guerrillas have used violence against civilians, politicians and state agents, there are important differences in terms of their main targets. Paramilitary violence has primarily affected civilians and militants of leftist parties. Between the late 1980s and the mid 2000s, more

than 3,500 members of the leftist *Unión Patriótica* were either murdered or disappeared at the hands of state agents and paramilitaries (Dudley 2008: 32). In contrast, guerrillas have targeted mainly state agents and politicians from the Liberal and Conservative parties. Civilians also have been victims of guerrilla actions, especially through kidnappings and recently the leftist insurgency has attacked groups of civilians accused by this organization of being paramilitary sympathizers. However, this organization never set in motion a systematic strategy of physical elimination of a particular political group comparable to the one developed by paramilitaries. Thus, in contexts characterized by a high level of conflict between armed actors, independents and mainly leftist militants may be more likely to be victims of violence than traditional party identifiers. Thus, they may abstain from participation in any political activity as a mechanism to protect themselves from paramilitary violence.

Figure 7 displays the cross-level interaction between *system support* and *dispute* indicates that, when there is no dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries, there are no significant differences in the probability of voting according to different levels of system support. However, in contexts in which armed actors compete, the chance of voting significantly varies for different levels of system support. Among individuals with a low level of system support, an increase in the intensity of the dispute between guerrilla and paramilitaries generates a small decrease in the average probability of voting. Yet, for individuals with average and high levels of system support, this probability increases as the level of dispute between the armed actors augments. As we move from no dispute to the highest level of conflict between armed actors, the expected probability of voting for individuals with an average level of system support increases from .56 to .71. For individuals with a high level of system support, this probability goes from .56 to .81 (Figure 3). It seems that those individuals who believe in the legitimacy of the political system

90

are willing to assume the risks associated with participating in elections in a context in which armed actors are disputing the control of a given area; perhaps voting is a mechanism to express their support for the political system.
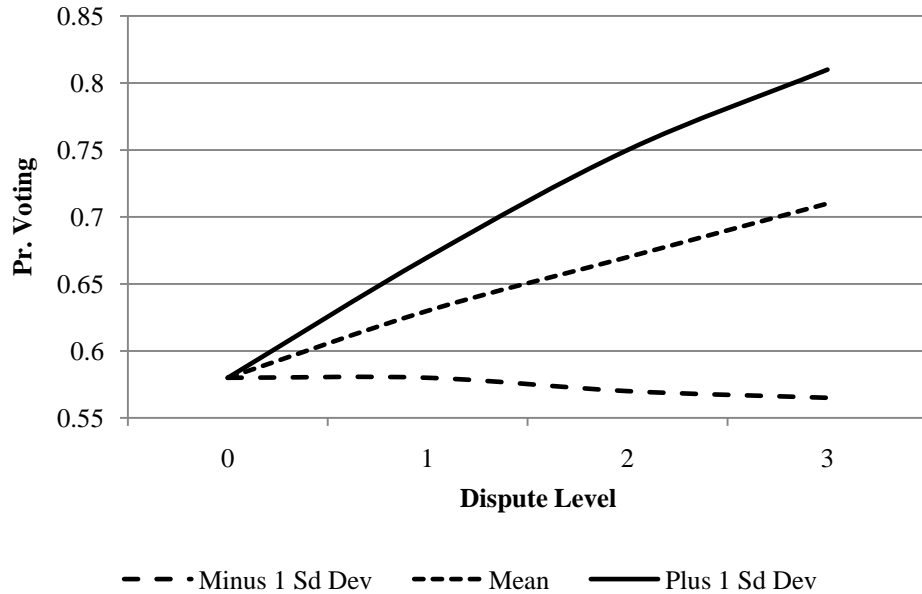


**Figure 7: Effect of Dispute on the Predicted Probability of Voting for Different Levels of**

**System Support**

The cross-level interaction between *political engagement* and *poverty* shows that as individuals increase their level of political engagement, the effect of contextual poverty on the average probability of voting tends to decrease its magnitude. As displayed in Figure 8, among individuals with a high level of political engagement, an increase in the contextual level of poverty from zero to its highest level only augments the average probability of participating in elections by about 4 percentage points. On the other hand, the odds of participating in elections for individuals with average and low levels of political engagement tend to be more affected by

changes in contextual levels of poverty. For citizens with a typical level of political engagement, as we move from no poverty to the highest level of contextual poverty, the average probability of voting goes from .66 to .78. Among the low political engaged, this probability increases 25 points, as it goes from .54 to .79.
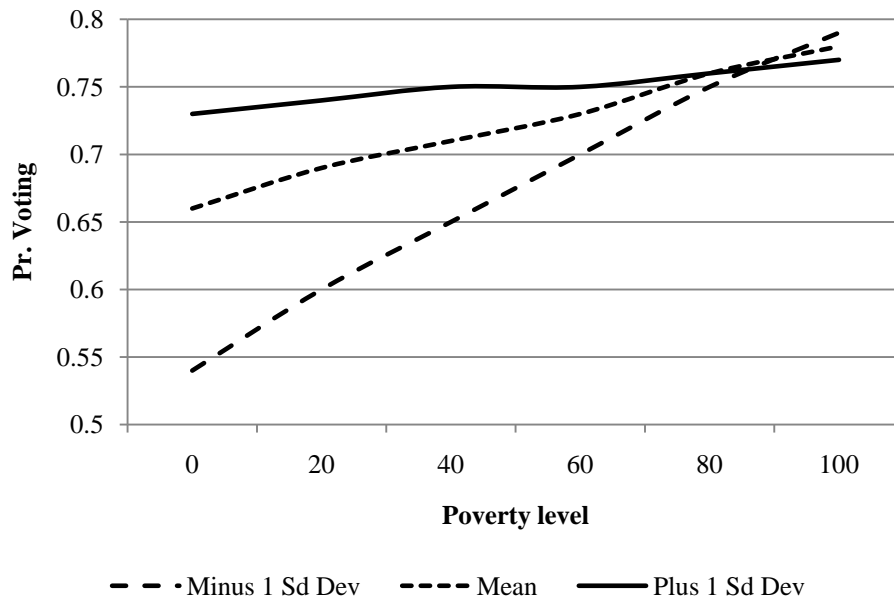


**Figure 8: Effect of Poverty on the Predicted Probability of Voting for Different Levels of Political Engagement**

As mentioned, the positive effect of contextual poverty on the log-odds of voting may be consequence of the prevalence of clientelistic networks in poorer municipalities and the ability of these networks to mobilize the electorate to vote. However, individuals with a high level of political engagement may be less affected by the mobilization efforts of political networks because they are already involved in politics; they may be part of those political networks so their chances of participating in elections are already high. Conversely, the less engaged in

politics may be more affected by the political networks' mobilization efforts. Thus, the average probability of voting of the less engaged in politics suffers a substantial increase as we move from richer to poorer municipalities, because in the latter areas political networks are expected to be strong and very effective mobilizing the electorate to vote.

Finally, a comparison between the variance components ($\tau_{00}$) of the fully unconditional model and the conditional model with cross-level interactions, indicates that about 40% the total between-municipalities variance in log-odds of voting in local elections is accounted for by the level-2 variables included in the conditional model. Thus, modeling some of the level-1 slopes represented a significant increase in model fit with respect to the conditional model without cross-level interactions.

### 5.2.2   Vote Intention Models

The second set of models has *vote intention for the incumbent* as the dependent variable. As in the previous sub-section, I begin by discussing results from the fully unconditional model; then I analyze the direct effects of violent contexts on the probability of supporting a right wing incumbent such as Álvaro Uribe. Finally, I discuss how contextual effects are moderated by individual level variables.

A significant intercept in the fully unconditional model indicates an important variation among municipalities in their mean vote intention (Model 1, Table 4). The intercept also shows that the average probability of expressing an intention to vote for President Uribe was equal to .73[31]; in other words the probability of supporting the incumbent in the 2006 elections was high.

_____

[31] $p$ = OR/(1+OR); OR = 2.7, therefore 2.7/(1+2.7) = .73.

This result is not surprising as Uribe's government maintained a popular support above 50% during his first term in office (Rodríguez-Raga and Seligson 2007). However, the model's variance component $\tau_{00}$ shows a significant variation between municipalities in the average probability of vote intention for Uribe. In fact, 95% of the municipalities lie between .45 and .90 with respect to this probability. It appears that while in some municipalities about 90% of citizens intended to vote for Uribe, in others only about half the adults were planning to support the incumbent in the 2006 elections. In short, the fully unconditional model suggests that between municipalities changes in support for Uribe should be associated with contextual level factors.

The Conditional HLM model for vote intention includes as individual level variables *education*, *age*, *ideology*, *gender*, *socioeconomic status*, *party identification*, and *current* and *past sociotropic evaluations of the economy*. I model the level-1 intercept using two contextual level variables: *guerrillas versus paramilitaries*, a continuous measure capturing the local balance of power between these two armed actors at the municipal level[32] and a municipal level measure of *ideology*.[33] The functional form of the conditional model for vote intention is the following.

For the dependent variable vote intention for the incumbent, the level-1 equation is:

$\eta_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} (\text{Education})_{ij} + \beta_{2j} (\text{Age})_{ij} + \beta_{3j} (\text{Ideology})_{ij} + \beta_{4j} (\text{Gender})_{ij} + \beta_{5j} (\text{SES})_{ij} +$

$\beta_{6j} (\text{party ID})_{ij} + \beta_{7j} (\text{Current sociotropic})_{ij} + \beta_{8j} (\text{Prospective sociotropic})_{ij}$ .

The level-2 equation for vote intention is:

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[32] This variable goes from -4 to 4, where values from -4 to -2 represent different levels of guerrilla control, scores from 2 to 4 describe the various degrees of paramilitary control. Disputed municipalities where coded -1 when guerrillas show a slight advantage over paramilitaries, and 1 when paramilitaries are the armed actor having a minor advantage. Zero indicates absence of armed actors.

[33] Contextual ideology is a continuous variable measured in a 1 to 5 scale, where low scores indicate consistent support for left wing parties and high scores show regular support for the right.

$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}$ (Guerrillas v. Paramilitaries)$_j$ + $\gamma_{02}$ (Ideology)$_j$ + $u_{0j}$ .

As discussed above, I expect guerrilla controlled municipalities to have lower average probabilities of supporting the incumbent than paramilitary controlled regions. Thus, I anticipate *guerrillas versus paramilitaries* to have a positive sign. I also anticipate municipal level ideology to have a positive effect on vote intention for a right wing incumbent, as higher scores of contextual ideology indicate a municipal history of support for parties closer to the right. Following the literature on vote choice (Nadeau and Lewis-Beck 2001; Lockerbie 1991; Lewis-Beck and Rice 1984; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Fiorina 1978; Bartels 2000) and recent findings on the determinants of vote choices in Colombian presidential elections (Hoskin et al. 2003), I expect that being older and male, having high socioeconomic status, being Liberal or Conservative, having a positive evaluation of the current economic situation, and having a positive evaluation of the future economic situation will increase vote intention for President Uribe. On the other hand, I expect education to decrease the chances of supporting Uribe, as educated individuals are anticipated to be more liberal (Glaser 2001; Shaffer 1982) and therefore less supportive of a right wing incumbent like Uribe.

## Table 6: HLM Models of Vote Intention (Presidential Elections)

| | Model 1 Fully Unconditional | | Model 2 Conditional | | Model 3 Conditional Cross-level Interactions | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fixed Effects** | Coefficient (Robust SE) | | Coefficient (Robust SE) | | Coefficient (Robust SE) | |
| **Level-2 predictors** | | | | | | |
| Intercept $\gamma00$ | 0.993 | *** | 0.939 | *** | 0.978 | *** |
| | (0.085) | | (0.115) | | (0.117) | |
| Guerrilla v. Paramilitaries $\gamma01$ | | | 0.117 | * | 0.197 | ** |
| | | | (0.050) | | (0.059) | |
| Ideology$\gamma02$ | | | 0.413 | * | 0.825 | ** |
| | | | (0.169) | | (0.219) | |
| **Level-1 predictors** | | | | | | |
| Education $\gamma10$ | | | -0.041 | ** | -0.046 | ** |
| | | | (0.015) | | (0.015) | |
| Ideology $\gamma11$ | | | | | -0.043 | * |
| | | | | | (0.020) | |
| Age $\gamma20$ | | | -0.008 | * | -0.008 | * |
| | | | (0.003) | | (0.003) | |
| Ideology$\gamma30$ | | | 0.012 | *** | 0.012 | *** |
| | | | (0.002) | | (0.002) | |
| Gender $\gamma40$ | | | -0.156 | | -0.156 | |
| | | | (0.093) | | (0.094) | |
| Socioeconomic Status $\gamma50$ | | | 0.001 | | 0.001 | |
| | | | (0.003) | | (0.003) | |
| Party ID (Traditional) $\gamma60$ | | | 0.437 | ** | 0.370 | ** |
| | | | (0.134) | | (0.120) | |
| Guerrilla V. Paramilitaries $\gamma61$ | | | | | -0.165 | * |
| | | | | | (0.079) | |
| Ideology $\gamma62$ | | | | | -0.827 | * |
| | | | | | (0.328) | |
| Sociotropic (Current) $\gamma70$ | | | 0.014 | *** | 0.014 | *** |
| | | | (0.002) | | (0.002) | |
| Sociotropic (Past) $\gamma80$ | | | 0.009 | *** | 0.009 | *** |
| | | | (0.001) | | (0.001) | |
| **Randon Effects** **Variance Components** | | | | | | |
| Municipal level effect $\tau00$ | 0.368 | *** | 0.297 | *** | 0.297 | *** |
| Individual level effect $\sigma2$ | 0.607 | | 0.545 | | 0.545 | |
| Reliability of intercept | 0.67 | | 0.54 | | 0.54 | |
| Percentage explained† | | | 19 | | 19 | |

* p < .05; ** p <. 01; *** p < .001

† Between municipalities variance in voting accounted for by level-2 variables

Results from the conditional model displayed in Column 2 of Table 6 confirm my expectations. The log-odds of expressing intention to vote for President Uribe were positively related to *guerrillas versus paramilitaries* and *contextual ideology*. In areas controlled by guerrillas, the average probability of expressing support for President Álvaro Uribe appears to be significantly lower than in municipalities controlled by the right wing paramilitaries. Holding all other variables constant, at the highest level of guerrilla control the average probability of vote intention for Uribe is expected to be about .62, this probability reaches approximately to .79 in municipalities where right wing paramilitaries experience a high level of control (Figure 6). Results also support the argument that armed actors need to consolidate a minimum level of military control to have a significant influence on individuals' political behavior. The unconditional model showed that the national average probability of vote intention for Uribe is about .73. Following the conditional model, it is clear that disputed municipalities have average probabilities of vote intention for the incumbent somehow close to the national average probability. For municipalities in which guerrillas only have a slight military advantage over paramilitaries this probability is .70 , and in areas in which paramilitaries have a minor military advantage over their enemy, the average probability of vote intention for the incumbent reaches .74 (Figure 6).
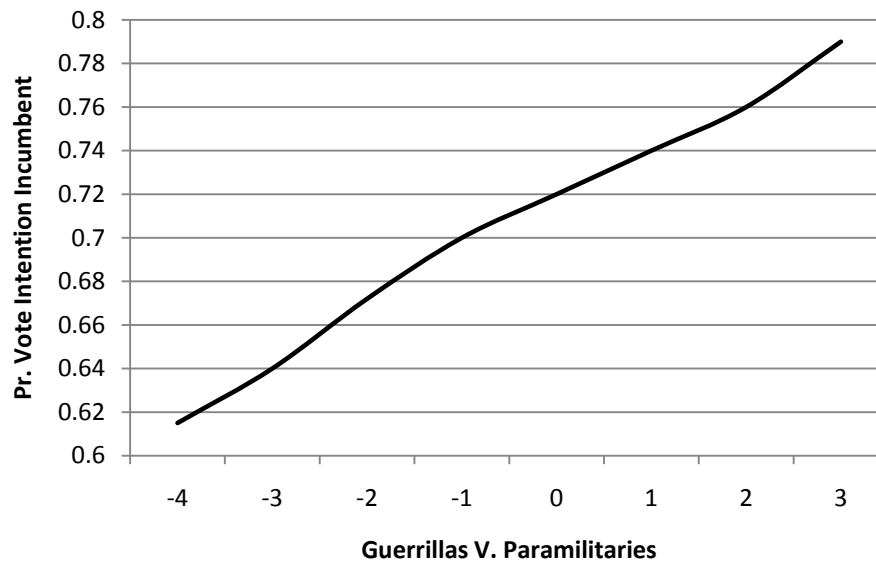
**Figure 9: Effect of Guerrilla v. Paramilitary Control on the Predicted Probability of**

**Vote Intention for the Incumbent**

Individuals living in armed actors' controlled municipalities are more likely to align their electoral preferences with the political orientation of the violent organization controlling the area. However, this "influence" on individuals' political behavior augments as armed actors increase their level of control of a given municipality. Areas in which an armed actor exercises close to full sovereignty are politically homogeneous and less competitive, offering citizens a limited array of electoral options (Rodríguez-Raga and Gómez-Albarello 2007). Additionally, under these contexts, political dissent represents a risk to individuals' security, so the threat of violence compels voters to behave consistently with the political preferences proclaimed by the dominant armed actor.

The vote model showed that Colombian guerrillas did not have a significant effect on electoral participation; on the other hand, the vote intention model indicates that municipalities

controlled by this armed actor have a low average probability of supporting President Uribe. These results may indicate that guerrillas are more interested or more capable of having an effect on electoral results than on electoral participation. As a FARC commander declared, his organization is less interested in blocking elections and more concerned with trying to undermine traditional parties' access to political power (Ferro and Uribe 2002). In the case of the reelection of Álvaro Uribe, guerrillas might have been particularly interested in undermining electoral support for the incumbent, due to his right wing ideological orientation, and because Uribe has been one of the most fierce enemies of Colombian guerrillas. Conversely, in paramilitary controlled municipalities Uribe's candidacy reached the highest level of popular support.[34] This outcome may be explained considering different factors. An ideological proximity between paramilitaries and the incumbent may have motivated this criminal group to "promote" a candidate representing a political project favorable to their interests. However, even if paramilitaries did not promote Uribe's candidacy, right wing politicians tend to perform well in regions controlled by this organization as the most conservative segments of the traditional parties emerge as sole competitors in elections and leftist parties have been dismantled consequence of paramilitary violence (Dudley 2008; López 2007). Finally, in several regions politicians belonging to Uribe's congressional coalition used paramilitaries to increase their electoral returns intimidating the electorate and their political competitors (López 2007; Valencia 2007). If politicians from outside Uribe's coalition could not promote their own candidacies, they were also unable to promote their presidential candidates; consequently, there is a chance

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[34] Uribe has been one of the most popular presidents of Colombia, enjoying strong nationwide support. As I showed in the unconditional model the average probability of vote intention for Uribe was .73. This probability reached .78 in municipalities controlled by the paramilitaries.

that Uribe emerged almost as a single candidate in regions in which politicians from his coalition were backed by the right wing paramilitaries.

Regarding contextual ideology, results indicate that municipalities with a history of electoral support for rightist parties have a significantly higher average probability of supporting a right wing incumbent than municipalities in which parties closer to the left have won the local executive. In the first type of municipalities the predicted probability of supporting Uribe is .95; this probability is .79 for municipalities traditionally governed by the left. This result suggests that citizens have a higher chance of backing candidates and political parties representing an ideological orientation that has achieved a dominant status. As a party consistently gains access to power, it will be in a privileged position to promote its political views among the citizenry and to consolidate a political network that will help this organization to maintain or increase its electoral base.

A comparison between the unconditional and conditional models level-2 variance components ($\tau_{00}$), indicates that there was a reduction in $\tau_{00}$ from 0.368 in the unconditional model to 0.297 in the conditional one. This reduction suggests that about 19% of the total between-municipalities variance in log-odds of vote intention for Uribe is accounted for by the level-2 variables.

Finally, level-1 results are consistent with the literature on the effects of partisanship and economic evaluations on vote decisions. Being Liberal or Conservative (traditional party identification) significantly increases the probability of supporting Uribe, a president backed by a bipartisan coalition in Congress. Similarly, ideology has a significant impact on vote intention for the incumbent; so the closer the self-identification with the right, the higher the individual probability of supporting a right wing incumbent like Uribe. Beyond partisan and ideological

identifications, the economy has a significant impact on vote intention for the incumbent. Individuals with positive assessments of the current and future state of the Colombian economy, have a high probability of rewarding the incumbent with their electoral support. On the other hand, education and age were found to have a negative and significant impact on vote intention for Uribe. More educated individuals are probably less supportive of the incumbent as they are able to have access to more and better sources of political information; or because a rightist incumbent like Uribe finds less support among educated citizens as they tend to be more liberal (Glaser 2001; Shaffer 1982). Finally, gender and socioeconomic status do not impact support for the incumbent. This result is not surprising because Colombian political parties are not articulated around class lines; and although Uribe abandoned the Liberal Party, he attracted an important contingent of Conservative and Liberal politicians that have helped him to build a bipartisan and multi-class electoral coalition.

The last HLM model for vote intention explores the extent to which the strength of the associations between individual level factors and vote intention for the incumbent is affected by differences in violent contexts. As, most of the contextual level variables resulted in *t*-statistic values less than 1.50, the final model included cross-level interactions for only two individual level variables, *education* and *partisanship*. The equations for the cross-level interactions are:

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} (\text{Ideology})_j$$

$$\beta_{6j} = \gamma_{60} + \gamma_{61} (\text{Guerrilla v. Paramilitaries})_j + \gamma_{62} (\text{Ideology})_j$$

$$\beta_{kj} = \gamma_k$$

Where $\gamma_{10}$ is the intercept for the *education* slope and $\gamma_{11}$ is the effect of *contextual ideology*. $\gamma_{60}$ is the intercept for the *traditional party ID* slope, and $\gamma_{61}$ and $\gamma_{62}$ are the respective effects of *guerrilla v. paramilitaries* and *contextual ideology*. $\gamma_k$ are the remaining intercepts, for the

individual level variables which did not have significantly different effects across violent contexts.

Results displayed in the last column of Table 6, confirm the findings of the conditional HLM model without cross-level interactions. This model also shows that the effects of contextual ideology and the variable capturing the balance of power between guerrillas and paramilitaries are moderated by *partisanship* and *education*.

A significant effect of the variable capturing the *balance of power between guerrillas and paramilitaries* on the *party identification* slope indicates that, as I expected, there are significant differences in the impact of a violent context on the average probability of supporting the incumbent for Liberal and Conservative party sympathizers versus supporters of other parties. This conditional effect captured in Figure 10 indicates that among traditional parties' followers, a change in the armed actor dominating a municipality has a very small effect on their average probability of supporting the incumbent. In other words, identifiers of these parties have a high chance of supporting a right wing incumbent, regardless of the armed actor dominating the area. For non-traditional party identifiers, the situation is completely different because this group of voters is way more affected by changes in the dominant armed actor. Thus, in areas in which the left wing insurgency exercise any level of control, the average probability of supporting a right-wing incumbent such Uribe, ranges from .59 to .69. In the same way, in areas in which paramilitaries enjoy a small advantage over the insurgency this probability increases to .76 and it reaches a maximum of .83 for those municipalities totally controlled by these illegal armed actors.
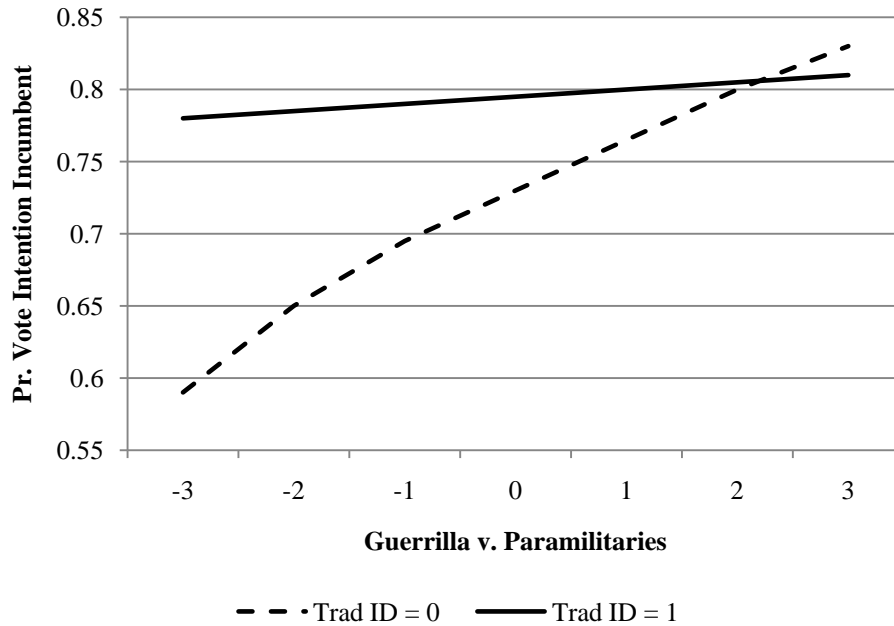
**Figure 10: Effect of Guerrilla v. Paramilitaries on the Predicted Probability of Vote Intention for the Incumbent. Traditional Parties Identifiers v. Identifiers of Other Parties**

Similarly, the cross-level interaction between *partisanship* and *contextual ideology* shows, on the one hand, that for members of traditional parties a change in contextual ideology has no effect on the average likelihood of supporting a right wing incumbent. Regardless of the context, they are expected to support the incumbent with a probability of about .79 (Figure 11). On the other hand, for members of other parties this probability registers a significant increase as contextual ideology moves to the right. In municipalities with a history of support for the left the average probability of supporting a right wing incumbent is about .86; this probability reaches .99 in municipalities traditionally governed by the right.

**Figure 11: Effect of Contextual Ideology on the Predicted Probability of Vote Intention for the Incumbent. Traditional Parties Identifiers v. Identifiers of Other Parties**

Why are Liberal and Conservative identifiers not affected significantly by changes in the political environment? Despite a reduction during the past few decades in the percentage of Colombian citizens identified with the Liberal and Conservative parties,[35] these organizations still enjoy of a very loyal base of supporters that tends to vote for the candidates of their respective parties (Hoskin et al. 2003). In 2002 and 2006 Uribe's electoral coalition benefited from this group of voters. Although Uribe abandoned the Liberal party in 2002, his dissidence was supported by the most conservative leaders of the Liberal Party, who attracted to Uribe's camp an important number of partisan voters. On the other hand, the Conservative Party gave its full support to Uribe's candidacies both in 2002 and 2006 as this party did not nominate its own presidential candidate. Thus, the high level of support enjoyed for Uribe among Liberal and

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[35] In 1993 61% of Colombians identified themselves as Liberal or Conservative. In 2007 traditional party identifiers dropped to 39% (Hoskin et al. 2003; Rodríguez-Raga and Seligson 2008).

Conservative identifiers may be a consequence of the bipartisan nature of his electoral coalition. The consistency of this support, as the political context changes (i.e., as we move from guerrilla controlled regions to municipalities under paramilitary dominance), may be explained by a strong commitment of Liberal and Conservative militants to Uribe and their respective party leaders. This loyalty may lead them to resist the influence of a dominant armed actor or a hegemonic political party when these organizations do not share their political views.

The bigger influence of the political environment on the probability of supporting the incumbent among non-traditional party identifiers may be caused by a lack of partisan identities among this group of voters. Most individuals included in this group identified themselves as independents; meaning that they do not follow a specific political party. Thus, their political preferences are expected to be unstable and highly influenced by changes in the political context. For instance, as an armed actor consolidates its control in a region, non-traditional party identifiers may be the first to align their preferences with the political orientation represented by the dominant armed actor.

Finally, results indicate that the effect of contextual ideology is also moderated by *education*. Thus, there is a negative and significant effect of contextual ideology on the education slope. This result corroborates that, on average, individuals living in municipalities with a history of electoral support for rightist parties in local elections have a significantly higher average probability of supporting a right wing incumbent than dwellers in municipalities in which leftist parties traditionally win the local executive. However, as shown in Figure 12, these probabilities are significantly higher for individuals with low levels of education compared to individuals with higher levels of schooling.
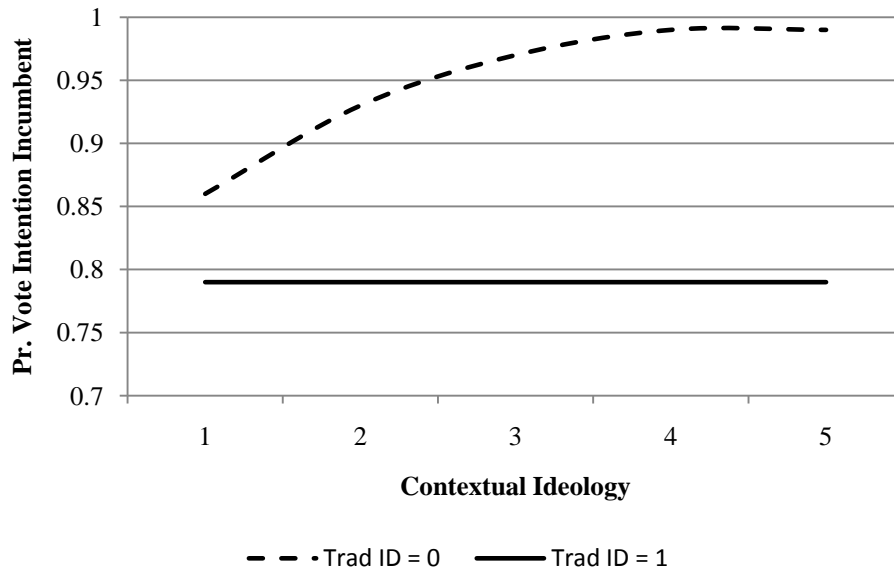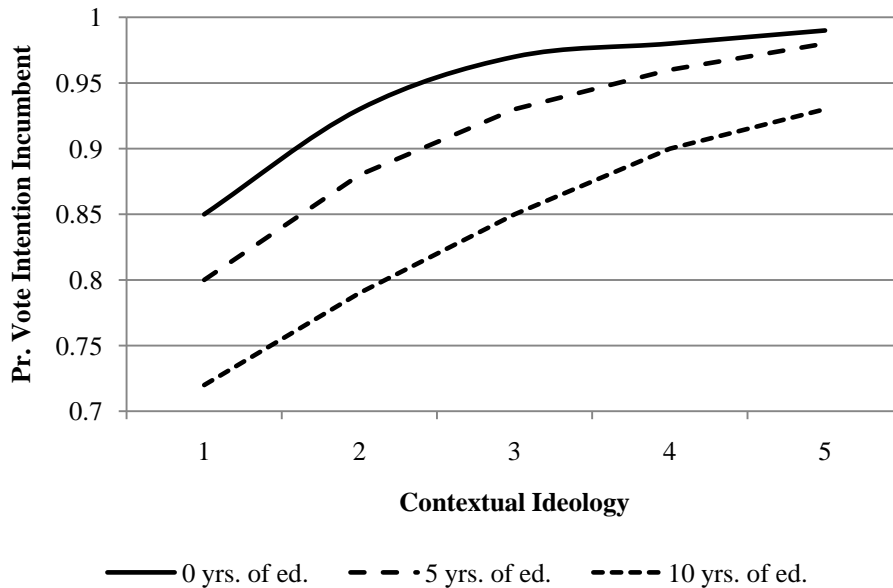
**Figure 12: Effect of Contextual Ideology on the Predicted Probability of Vote Intention for the Incumbent for Different Levels of Education**

In municipalities with a history of electoral support for the left, individuals with zero years of education are expected to support a right wing incumbent with an average probability of .85; this probability is about .72 for citizens with 10 years of schooling. On the other hand, in a political context where the right has reached a hegemonic status in local elections, the probability of supporting a right wing incumbent increases to .99 for individuals with no education and to .93 for those citizens with 10 years of education. There is no doubt that the municipal political atmosphere has a strong effect on individuals' political decisions, so once a political party gains a hegemonic status, it will easily promote its political views, and it will find a fertile ground to sustain and increase its electoral base. However, educated individuals are less susceptible to this contextual influence. Education may give individuals the necessary tools to obtain more diverse sources of political information; thus educated citizens will be able to contrast political information generated in a homogeneous political context.

106

To finish, the comparison between the variance components ($\tau_{00}$) of the fully unconditional model and the conditional model with cross-level interactions indicates that about 19% the total between-municipalities variance in log-odds of voting in local elections is accounted for by the level-2 variables included in the latter model. This indicates that, both conditional models, with and without cross-level interactions, displayed similar model fit scores.

## 5.3    DISCUSSION

Results presented in this chapter support previous findings on the effects of social and political contexts on political behavior, according to which individuals tend to adjust their political views with those prevailing in their political milieu (Huckfeldt et al. 2004a; MacKuen and Brown 1987; Mondak et al. 1996). However, this chapter represents an important contribution to the literature on political behavior as it deals with a type of context previously not analyzed by the research on contextual effects, namely a violent environment. Results from this analysis indicated that political violence characteristic of many Colombian municipalities had an important impact on individuals' electoral participation and vote choices. More important, the nature of this impact is closely related to the balance of military power between the competing armed actors (guerrillas and paramilitaries) and their strategic objectives towards the political system.

Dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries demonstrated the strongest effect on electoral participation. Contested areas exhibited the lowest average probabilities of voting in local elections. Individuals living in this type of political environments are less likely to vote, presumably because the high levels of indiscriminate political violence generated by competing

107

armed actors discourage their electoral participation. Any type of political involvement may trigger violent reprisals, so citizens abstain from voting as a mechanism to protect themselves from political violence. Indiscriminate violence also discourages politicians from participating in politics, consequently political competition will be very low and there will be almost no mobilization efforts that stimulate a reduction in electoral participation. Paramilitaries, unlike guerrillas, revealed a significant negative effect on electoral participation. This organization has been very efficient in reducing political competition and helping right wing politicians create political hegemonies (Valencia 2007). Thus, as paramilitaries increase their control of a given region, the political macro-environment becomes more homogeneous, which increases electoral abstention (Gimpel and Lay 2005).

Violent contexts also demonstrated an important role explaining political preferences. As we move from areas dominated by left wing insurgents to regions controlled by right wing paramilitary groups, individuals were more likely to support a presidential candidate located on the right of the ideological spectrum. Individuals living in municipalities controlled by guerrillas or paramilitaries are more likely to align their electoral preferences with the political orientation of the dominate organization. Under these contexts, political dissent represents a risk to individuals' security, so the threat of violence compels voters to support candidates and political parties preferred by the dominant armed actor. Additionally, dominated regions tend to be politically homogeneous, offering citizens a limited array of electoral options.

Results on the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior showed that political violence is a very effective tool to model political behavior. Armed actors employ violence or the threat of its use to shape individuals' political behavior by altering the expected value of certain political actions. However, armed actors also have an influence on citizens'

political actions and preferences when they use violence to redefine political equilibriums. Results from this chapter suggest that once an armed actor consolidates its control over a region, it is in a privileged position to create a political hegemony by eliminating political competitors. As the contextual literature has demonstrated, politically homogeneous environments tend to generate a correspondence between individual preferences and surrounding preferences (Huckfeldt et al. 2004a). In this case the "surrounding preferences" are defined by the strongest violent organization.

This chapter studied the effects of additional contextual factors on electoral participation and vote intention; these were municipal level poverty and contextual ideology. The former contextual factor appeared to have a positive impact on the probability of voting in local elections. Although, this finding contradicts the American literature on the effects of socioeconomic contexts on participation, it makes sense for the Colombian case. The prevalence of strong clientelistic networks in poorer municipalities and the capacity of these structures to mobilize the electorate to vote (Leal and Dávila 1990) may explain why in the Colombian case contextual poverty fosters voting. On the other hand, contextual ideology was found to have a significant impact on vote intention. Municipalities with a history of electoral support for rightist parties revealed a higher average probability of supporting a right wing incumbent than municipalities in which the left has traditionally won the local executive. This result highlighted, once again, that when a certain ideological orientation achieves a hegemonic status, individuals will support political parties and candidates representing the dominant ideas.

The hierarchical nature of the analyses presented here allowed me to test the effect of several individual level factors on electoral participation and vote intention. Overall, results from these variables supported previous finding in the literature on political behavior. More important,

the hierarchical approach permitted me to explore the extent to which the strength of the associations between contextual level factors and the outcome variables were moderated by individual characteristics. As I expected, partisanship played a very important role in moderating the effect of several contextual factors on participation and vote intention. Liberals and Conservatives appeared to be less affected than followers of other parties by violent environments and other political contexts. Among sympathizers of non-traditional parties, higher levels of dispute significantly reduced their probability of voting; similarly, they aligned their political preferences with the dominant armed actor ideological orientation. This was not the case with sympathizers of the Liberal and Conservative parties. What do explain that Liberals and Conservatives are almost not affected by changes in the political environment? There is no doubt that political violence has not affected Liberals and Conservatives to the same extent as it has leftist militants. As mentioned, more than 3,500 left wing politicians and sympathizers were assassinated by paramilitaries and state agents. Thus, even under a violent context, sympathizers of traditional parties may be in a relatively safer position to express their political preferences. On the other hand, Liberals and Conservatives have deeper partisan loyalties than militants of other parties; consequently a strong commitment to their parties may explain why these individuals are somehow resistant to the influence of a political context that is at odds with their political views.

# 6.0    VIOLENT CONTEXTS, TURNOUT, AND ELECTORAL RESULTS: AN AGGREGATE LEVEL APPROACH

Theories in the field of political behavior are generally formulated and tested at the individual level. Yet, the sum of citizens' opinions and actions creates an aggregate reality that in many cases works differently than the individual behavior. So analyzing the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior at the municipal level, allows me to find out whether or not my general hypotheses hold both at the individual and aggregate levels, and to what extent the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior differs as we move from one level of analysis to the other. Furthermore, the aggregate level analysis is crucial to determine whether or not changes in the armed actor dominating a region produce alterations in the local balance of power. Results presented in the previous chapter indicated that citizens' political preferences are in fact altered by changes in the violent context; however, are these opinion changes reflected in the electoral outcomes?

As this chapter shifts the focus of the analysis to the aggregate level, the question leading this part of the dissertation is: What are the effects of guerrilla and paramilitary degrees of control and the magnitude of their territorial dispute on turnout and electoral results? Although I will test the impact of exactly the same main independent variables on the aggregate versions of voting and vote intention, the analysis that I will develop here goes beyond what presented in Chapter 5.0, because it will capture the real political effects of violent contexts.

Following the general theory presented in Chapter 2.0 and results from the previous chapter, I expect a reduction in turnout as armed actors consolidate their territorial control. Yet disputed municipalities will suffer the biggest turnout decline. On the other hand, as a single armed actor consolidates its control over a particular region, political parties close to this armed actor will be more likely to win local elections. For instance in guerrilla controlled regions leftist parties will be more successful than the right. The last dependent variable deserves a quick explanation. In Chapter 5.0 vote intention models tested the likelihood a citizen will prefer a right wing presidential candidate; here models on electoral results will evaluate the electoral success of political parties located on the right of the ideological spectrum.

In the theoretical chapter I stressed that the effect of violent contexts on political behavior is conditioned by partisanship, so minority party sympathizers should be more affected by the violent context than members of majority parties because, as argued in Chapter 2.0, sympathizers of majority parties are relatively impermeable to the effects of a context that is at odds with their partisan allegiances, because these individuals know they are part of a national majority. Conversely, militants of minority parties may feel an extra pressure towards compliance with majoritarian views when their immediate political environment supports political parties dominating at the national level. Can this argument be tested at the aggregate level? No, because municipalities do not feel the "pressures" of being in a minority position; that is something that only happens to individuals. Yet, I still think the effects of violent contexts on turnout and electoral results are moderated by the "aggregate" version of partisanship. That is the ideological orientation of the incumbent party.

Resembling the individual level, I expect guerrilla and paramilitary municipal levels of control and the magnitude of their territorial dispute will have a greater effect on turnout and

electoral results in municipalities governed by a mayor representing a minority party, particularity the left. Although this conditional hypothesis resembles the one tested in the previous chapter, the logic behind it is somewhat different. What explains the nature of this relationship is the evolution followed by the Colombian conflict during the period covered by the analysis (1988 – 2003). As described in Chapter 3.0, thanks to the strengthening of guerrillas during the 1980s, when popular election of mayors was introduced, many municipalities witnessed the electoral success of minority parties such as the UP. This alteration of the local balance of power contributed to the emergence of paramilitary bands, which had as a main objective forcing the left out from local power. Consequently, in municipalities governed by leftist parties the consolidation of paramilitaries as dominant armed actors should have the strongest impact on turnout and electoral results.

After this brief introduction this chapter is unfolded in three sections. In the first part I introduce the data and methods, making a brief discussion of the analytical strategy. Then I report the results from the models on electoral participation and electoral outcomes. Finally, I present a discussion of the main results of this chapter.

## 6.1     DATA AND METHODS

In this chapter I use data form a seven-wave panel in which waves correspond to each local election held in all Colombian municipalities between 1988 and 2003. My data set includes information on turnout and electoral results, armed actor's levels of territorial dispute and control, as well as several variables capturing political and socioeconomic characteristics of municipalities. To build this panel I gathered data from several sources. Electoral and political

variables were created using reports published by the National Electoral Registry Office (RNEC 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003); variables capturing different violent contexts were constructed using monthly reports on political violence published by the non governmental organization *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* (CINEP 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1997c, 1997b, 1997a, 1997d, 2000d, 2000a, 2000c, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d);[36] finally, municipalities' socioeconomic factors were obtained from a data base compiled by the Center for Economic Development of the *Universidad de Los Andes*.

### 6.1.1 Variables

In this chapter I will study the effect of violent contexts on two dependent variables: *turnout* and the *ideological orientation of the winning party*. *Turnout* is measured as the percentage of citizens 18 and older that cast a ballot in local elections. *Winning party* captures the ideological orientation of the triumphant political party in mayoral elections. This variable is measured in a 1 to 5 scale, where one indicates the local executive was captured by a left wing party and five indicates the mayoral elections were won by a right wing political party. In between, scores of two, three and four represent the municipality is governed by a center left, center, and center right parties respectively. These two dependent variables will allow me to test, at the aggregate level, the extent to which changes in armed actors' levels of control and dispute depress turnout and whether, in violent contexts, political parties winning elections share the ideological orientation of the armed actor controlling the region.

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[36] A detailed description of how I constructed the variables capturing different violent contexts was provided in Chapter 5.

Similar to the previous chapter, the main independent variables are a group of measures capturing armed actors' municipal level of control and the magnitude of territorial dispute. These variables are called *guerrilla versus paramilitary, paramilitary control*, *guerrilla control*, and *dispute*. A detailed description of these variables and how they were constructed was presented in Chapter 4.0. In addition to the variables capturing different violent contexts, my analysis controls for the effect of different factors found to have an effect on turnout and electoral results. Traditionally, aggregate studies of electoral participation have tested the impact of socioeconomic, political process and institutional variables (Fornos et al. 2004). The turnout models will control for the first two types of factors, including variables such as *poverty*, *inequality*, *education* and political *competition*. I will not control for the effect of institutional factors because my analysis is a within country comparison so there is no institutional variation between units. Finally, my analysis of turnout will control for the effect of structural barriers to participation including the variables *distance to the department capital* and municipalities *altitude*.

Models of electoral results will include the socioeconomic and political factors mentioned above, plus a variable controlling for the presence of *coca* plantations and two additional political variables: one measures the existence of *partisan hegemonies* and other captures the political *ideology of the incumbent party*. The last variable controls for a possible endogenous relationship between electoral results and armed actors levels of control. As mentioned in the previous chapter, that will be the case if armed actors move to places controlled by political parties sharing their ideology.

**Table 7: Chapter 6 Descriptive Statistics**

| Variable | N | Mean | Standard Deviation | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Dependent Variables* | | | | | |
| Turnout | 6872 | 56.29 | 12.92 | 0.03 | 98.45 |
| Elected Party's Ideology | 6015 | 3.39 | 0.68 | 1 | 5 |
| *Independent Variables* | | | | | |
| Guerrilla Control | 7287 | 0.20 | 0.48 | 0 | 3 |
| Paramilitary Control | 7287 | 0.07 | 0.27 | 0 | 3 |
| Dispute | 7287 | 0.18 | 0.42 | 0 | 3 |
| Guerrilla v. Paramilitary | 7287 | -0.22 | 1.11 | -4 | 4 |
| Leftist Mayor | 6042 | 0.02 | 0.15 | 0 | 1 |
| Traditional Mayor | 6042 | 0.82 | 0.39 | 0 | 1 |
| Competition | 6917 | 47.85 | 12.54 | 0 | 88.24 |
| Partisan Hegemony | 5922 | 0.72 | 1.30 | 0 | 4 |
| Poverty (UBN) | 7414 | 51.82 | 21.17 | 3.30 | 100 |
| Inequality (GINI) | 7433 | 0.53 | 0.14 | 0.02 | 1 |
| Education | 7203 | 5.27 | 1.31 | 1.80 | 11.30 |
| Coca (ln) | 7434 | 2.57 | 3.31 | 0 | 11.10 |
| Population (ln) | 7493 | 9.57 | 1.03 | 6.34 | 15.74 |
| Altitude (ln) | 7434 | 6.29 | 1.72 | 0.69 | 8.03 |
| Distance to Department's Capital | 7434 | 120.27 | 97.40 | 0 | 600 |

To control for the mediating effect of *partisan ideology* on the impact of violent contexts on the dependent variables, both turnout and electoral results models will include interactions between the variables measuring actors' municipal level of control and the magnitude of territorial dispute, and the incumbent party ideology. Finally, all models presented in this chapter will control for the effect of time by including year dummies. Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics. A detailed description of the independent variables used in this chapter is presented in Appendix D.

### 6.1.2   Analytical Strategy

As mentioned, this chapter analyzes at the municipal level, the link between violent contexts and political behavior. To test this relationship I used a longitudinal analysis method known as Fixed Effects Vector Decomposition (FEDV). Similar to other methods used to analyze panel data, FEVD allows for dealing with unobserved heterogeneity (unit effects); that is, the myriad unmeasured explanatory variables that affect the behavior of the units of analysis (Kennedy 2003). Traditionally, Fixed Effects (FE) and Random Effects (RE) models have been used to deal with this unobserved heterogeneity; however, due the characteristics of some of my variables, FEVD has some advantages over RE and FE estimations.

Although, FE seems an adequate analytical approach because it treats the unit effects as emerging from a "fixed" sample of units, which is the case with my data (Johnson 1995: 1070), this model assumes that only time variant variables are important sources of information about the variations in the dependent variable. For this reason, the effects on the dependent variable of factors that do not vary over time cannot be estimated using this model (Green et al. 2001). Since my models will include time invariant as well as time variant variables, FE will not allow me to estimate the effects on the dependent variables of my whole set of independent variables.

RE models admit the estimation of time invariant variables. However, some authors have pointed out that the way RE models solve the problem of estimating time invariant variables is not correct. In order to estimate the effects of the independent variables (X), the unit effects (U) and the error term (E), the RE model assumes orthogonally between the X's and the unit effects. However, this is a very strong assumption because in reality unobserved variables may be correlated with my measures. If this assumption is not met, RE estimators are biased and inconsistent (Plümper and Troeger 2007). Beyond the critique of the main assumption of RE

models, I discarded this method based on a series of significant Hausman tests[37] comparing FE and RE models for turnout and electoral results, with and without interactions.[38]

In sum, I decided to estimate the aggregate models using FEVD because I am using a longitudinal data base consisting of fixed units (the entire population of Colombian municipalities) so I am supposed to estimate fixed effects and some of my independent variables are time invariant. Due to these conditions the FEVD method represents a good alternative for estimating time invariant variables in panel data in the presence of fixed unit effects (Plümper and Troeger 2007).

The intuition behind this method is that unit fixed effects are a vector of the mean effect of omitted variables, containing the effect of all time invariant variables. For this reason it is possible to regress the unit effects on the time invariant variables to obtain approximate estimates for these variables (Plümper and Troeger 2007: 128). The FEVD model estimation involves three steps: First, estimation of a traditional FE model. Second, regression of the fixed effect vector, obtained in step one, on the time invariant variables using OLS. And third, estimation of a pooled OLS model by including both time invariant and time variant variables, and the unexplained part of the fixed effects vector (the residuals). This step requires controling for multicollinearity and adjusting the degrees of freedom.[39]

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[37] This test compares FE and RE estimates and tests the null hypothesis of no correlation between the X's and the unobserved effects U (RE assumption), thus a significant Hausman test indicates a FE model is to be preferred over a RE estimation.

[38] Results from the Hausman tests were the following. Turnout models without interactions: $\chi^2(14)=197.5$, $p=.0000$. Turnout models with interactions: $\chi^2(20)=215.58$, $p=.0000$. Electoral results models without interactions: $\chi^2(11)=1245.14$, $p=.0000$. Electoral results models with interactions: $\chi^2(12)=1248.79$, $p=.0000$.

[39] A potential setback of FEVD is that the whole method is based on the assumptions that the "pure" unit effects may be related to the time variant variables but unrelated to the time invariant variables. This assumption is untestable and to some extent unrealistic.

## 6.2 RESULTS

This section reports results from the aggregate models that test the impact of guerrilla and paramilitary municipal levels of control and the magnitude of territorial dispute on political behavior. The first subsection focuses on turnout; the second deals with electoral results.

### 6.2.1 Turnout Models.

As mentioned in Chapter 2.0, I expect electoral participation to decrease as armed actors augment their territorial control in a given municipality; I also expect participation to reach its lowest level in disputed areas. In the previous chapter these hypotheses were supported empirically at the individual level. To what extent will these expectations receive empirical support at the municipal level? Will the negative effects of violent contexts on individual citizens' behavior be reflected at the aggregate level in terms of a significant decrease in turnout as guerrilla and paramilitaries augment their territorial control and the dispute between armed actors increases? In this section I will present results from two aggregate models of turnout. The basic functional form of these models is the following:

$$y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{C\&D})_{it} + \beta_2(\text{P})_{it} + \beta_3(\text{SC})_{it} + \beta_4(\text{SB})_i + \beta_5(\text{Year})_{it} + u_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

$$y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{C\&D})_{it} + \beta_2(\text{P})_{it} + \beta_3(\text{C\&D x P})_{it} + \beta_4(\text{SC})_{it} + \beta_5(\text{SB})_i + \beta_6(\text{Year})_{it} + u_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Both models include four sets of control variables. One captures socioeconomic characteristics of the municipality (SC). The second includes political variables (P) measuring competition and incumbent party ideology. The third includes two time invariant variables measuring municipalities' structural barriers to participation (SB). Finally, a series of time dummies (Year) allow me to control for the effect of each electoral year on turnout. The

difference between models 1 and 2 is that the latter includes a series of interactions between the variables capturing armed actors levels of control and dispute (C&D)[40] and two dummy variables capturing whether the incumbent represents a leftist party or a traditional party. These interactions capture the extent to which the effects of violent contexts are moderated by the ideological orientation of the political party controlling the local executive.

Regarding the first group of control variables I expect *poverty* and *inequality* to have a negative effect on turnout (Brady et al. 1995; Fornos et al. 2004; Rosenstone 1982). However, in the previous chapter I found contextual poverty to have a positive effect on citizens' probability of voting. Thus in the Colombian case the poorer municipalities will not necessarily reflect lower levels of turnout, as in these regions the presence of clientelistic networks may contribute to mobilizing citizens to the polls. On the other hand, I expect *education* and *population*, as a proxy for *urbanization*, and *political competition*, to have a positive effect on the dependent variable (Norris 2003). Municipalities in which most people have attained a higher level of education, turnout will increase as most people will have the intellectual resources needed to participate in elections. In urban areas turnout will be higher than in rural areas as people tend to have better access to voting places among other resources fostering participation. Similarly, political competition will increase turnout because in close elections citizens perceive that their votes will have a higher chance of affecting the electoral outcome (Cox and Munger 1989; Downs 1957).

Concerning the time invariant variables capturing structural barriers to participation, I expect both *altitude* and a municipality's *distance to the department capital* to have a negative effect on turnout. In municipalities located in mountain regions and far from the biggest cities, the electoral infrastructure may be poorer than in easy-to-reach and central areas; thus fewer

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[40] These variables are *guerrilla control, paramilitary control, and dispute.* A detailed description of them was presented in Chapter 4.

120

voting places will affect turnout levels. Peripheral and hard to reach municipalities may also have an important number of rural inhabitants that will be less likely to vote as they have to spend time and money reaching the few voting places existing in the municipality.

**Table 8: FEVD Models of Electoral Turnout, 1988 – 2003**

| | Model 1 Coefficient (SE) | | Model 2 Coefficient (SE) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guerrilla Control | -2.523 | *** | -2.196 | *** |
| | (0.234) | | (0.530) | |
| Paramilitary Control | -2.467 | *** | -2.916 | ** |
| | (0.409) | | (1.071) | |
| Dispute | -0.969 | ** | -1.717 | ** |
| | (0.281) | | (0.650) | |
| Competition | 0.150 | *** | 0.150 | *** |
| | (0.009) | | (0.009) | |
| Leftist Mayor (lagged) | 0.412 | | 0.704 | |
| | (0.801) | | (1.365) | |
| Traditional Mayor (lagged) | -0.259 | | -0.406 | |
| | (0.306) | | (0.390) | |
| Guerrilla Control X Leftist Mayor | | | 1.611 | |
| | | | (1.494) | |
| Paramilitary Control X Leftist Mayor | | | -7.032 | ** |
| | | | (2.583) | |
| Dispute X Leftist Mayor | | | -0.899 | |
| | | | (1.790) | |
| Guerrilla Control X Traditional Mayor | | | -0.548 | |
| | | | (0.585) | |
| Paramilitary Control X Traditional Mayor | | | 0.721 | |
| | | | (1.129) | |
| Dispute X Traditional Mayor | | | 0.921 | |
| | | | (0.694) | |
| Poverty (UBN) | -0.168 | *** | -0.170 | *** |
| | (0.009) | | (0.009) | |
| Inequality (GINI) | -5.360 | *** | -5.295 | *** |
| | (0.861) | | (0.861) | |
| Population (ln) | 4.051 | *** | 4.164 | *** |
| | (0.170) | | (0.171) | |
| Education | -4.599 | *** | -4.657 | *** |
| | (0.141) | | (0.141) | |
| Altitude (ln) | -0.635 | *** | -0.634 | *** |
| | (0.081) | | (0.081) | |
| Distance to Department's Capital | -0.013 | *** | -0.013 | *** |
| | (0.001) | | (0.001) | |
| 1992 | -9.476 | *** | -9.501 | *** |
| | (0.383) | | (0.383) | |
| 1994 | -4.471 | *** | -4.465 | *** |
| | (0.390) | | (0.390) | |
| 1997 | -12.991 | *** | -12.971 | *** |
| | (0.391) | | (0.391) | |
| 2000 | -0.865 | * | -0.903 | * |
| | (0.408) | | (0.408) | |
| 2003 | -2.326 | *** | -2.412 | *** |
| | (0.420) | | (0.420) | |
| η | 1.000 | *** | 1.000 | *** |
| | (0.014) | | (0.014) | |
| Constant | 57.024 | *** | 56.408 | *** |
| | (1.818) | | (1.841) | |
| | | | | |
| N | 5627 | | 5627 | |
| R2 | 0.686 | | 0.687 | |
| R2 Adjusted | 0.617 | | 0.618 | |

1990 dropped because of collinearity.
* p < .05; ** p <. 01; *** p < .001
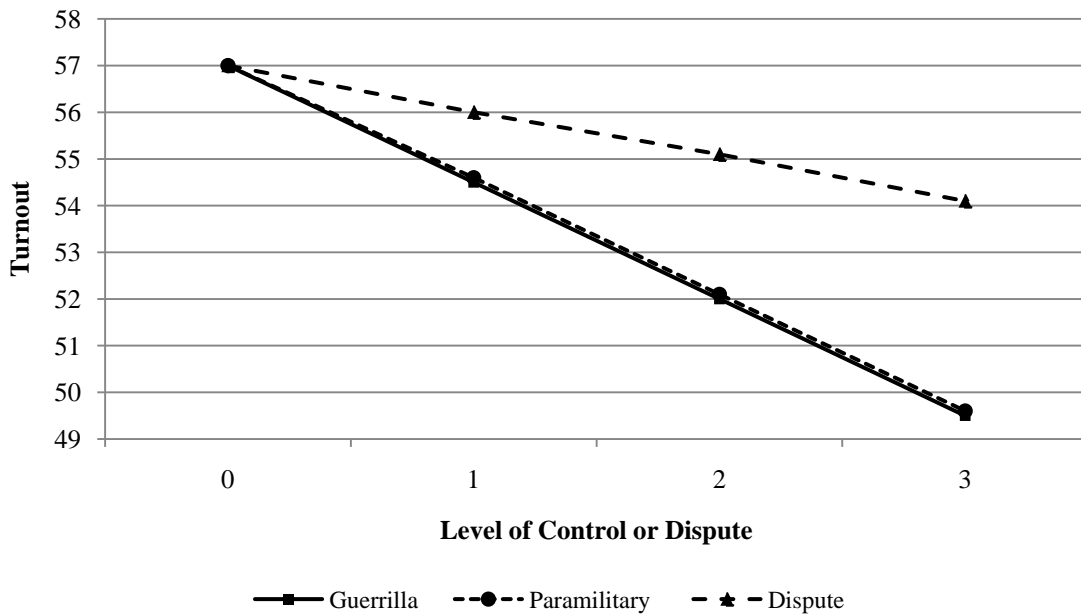
**Figure 13: Expected Values of Turnout for Different Violent Contexts**

A question emerges regarding the comparison of these results with those obtained for the same variables in the previous chapter. What may explain the fact that armed actors dispute has the strongest effect in reducing the chances of voting at the individual level, but it has only a small effect reducing turnout at the aggregate level? One possible answer is that, as I show in Chapter 5.0, the strong effect of dispute on the individual probability of voting is mainly a consequence of the massive electoral demobilization of minority party identifiers, especially leftist militants. However, the massive demobilization of minorities will not necessarily be reflected at the aggregate level in a strong reduction of turnout because identifiers of these parties constitute a small portion of the electorate.

In model 2 (Table 8) six interactions tested the extent to which the effects of the variables measuring armed actors levels of control and dispute are conditioned by the identity of the

incumbent party. Coefficients of the constitutive terms of an interaction cannot be interpreted as an unconditional effect because they only indicate the impact of a one unit change in X on Y when the conditioning variable is zero (Brambor et al. 2006). Thus, I calculated the effects of dispute, guerrilla and paramilitary control for municipalities in which the mayor represents a leftist party and municipalities governed by a mayor belonging to the Liberal or Conservative parties[41]. Results from the interactions displayed in Table 9 indicate that all the interactions between the different violent contexts and "traditional mayor" are significant; however, only the interaction between paramilitary control and "leftist mayor" is significant.

More important, interactions also suggest that when an armed actor increases its control in a municipality governed by a political party representing beliefs opposing the ideology promoted by the armed actor, turnout suffers the biggest reduction. In this kind of situation the consolidation of an armed actor represents an enormous threat to the political majority, so turnout suffers a sharp decrease since most citizens may be victims of political violence. This conditional effect is particularly clear when paramilitaries increase their control in municipalities with a leftist major. While the coefficient indicating the average effect of paramilitary control is -2.467, in municipalities with a leftist mayor the negative effect increases to -9.948. For the coefficient of guerrilla control, the average effect is -2.523, and the interaction between these variable and traditional mayor is -2.745. Figure 15, shows that in municipalities governed by a leftist mayor, as paramilitaries increase their control from the lowest to the highest level, turnout drops 20 percentage points. For municipalities with a traditional mayor as guerrillas increase their dominance, participation decreases only five points from 53% to 48%.

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[41] The conditional effect of violent contexts on Y is equal to: $\beta_1 + \beta_3 C$. Where $\beta_1$ is the coefficient of guerrilla control, paramilitary control or dispute, $\beta_3$ is the interaction term coefficient, and C are the different values of the conditional variable (incumbent party) (Brambor et al.2006).

**Table 9: Coefficients of the Interactions between Violent Contexts and Incumbent Party**

| Interaction | Coefficient (SE) | |
|---|---|---|
| Guerrilla Control X Leftist Mayor | -0.585 | |
| | (1.400) | |
| Paramilitary Control X Leftist Mayor | -9.948 | *** |
| | (2.365) | |
| Dispute X Leftist Mayor | -2.616 | |
| | (1.679) | |
| Guerrilla Control X Traditional Mayor | -2.745 | *** |
| | (0.262) | |
| Paramilitary Control X Traditional Mayor | -2.194 | *** |
| | (0.436) | |
| Dispute X Traditional Mayor | -0.796 | ** |
| | (0.304) | |

* p < .05; ** p <. 01; *** p < .001

Interactions also suggest the opposite situation: when an armed actor consolidates its control in municipalities governed by parties close to the armed actor's ideology, turnout is not affected by the violent context or it suffers a small reduction. A positive and not significant coefficient for the interaction between guerrilla control and leftist mayor indicates that in "leftist municipalities" the emergence of guerrillas as a hegemonic armed actor does not affects turnout. In these regions guerrillas might not take any action against incumbent politicians because the existing status quo is in line with their ideological orientation. Thus, under this type of scenario guerrillas do not have any incentive to promote abstention. The results also indicate that guerrillas are not promoting turnout in "leftist" municipalities. In the case of municipalities governed by traditional mayors, although the increase of paramilitary control has a negative impact on turnout, it is smaller (-2.194) than the average effect of paramilitary control (-2.467).
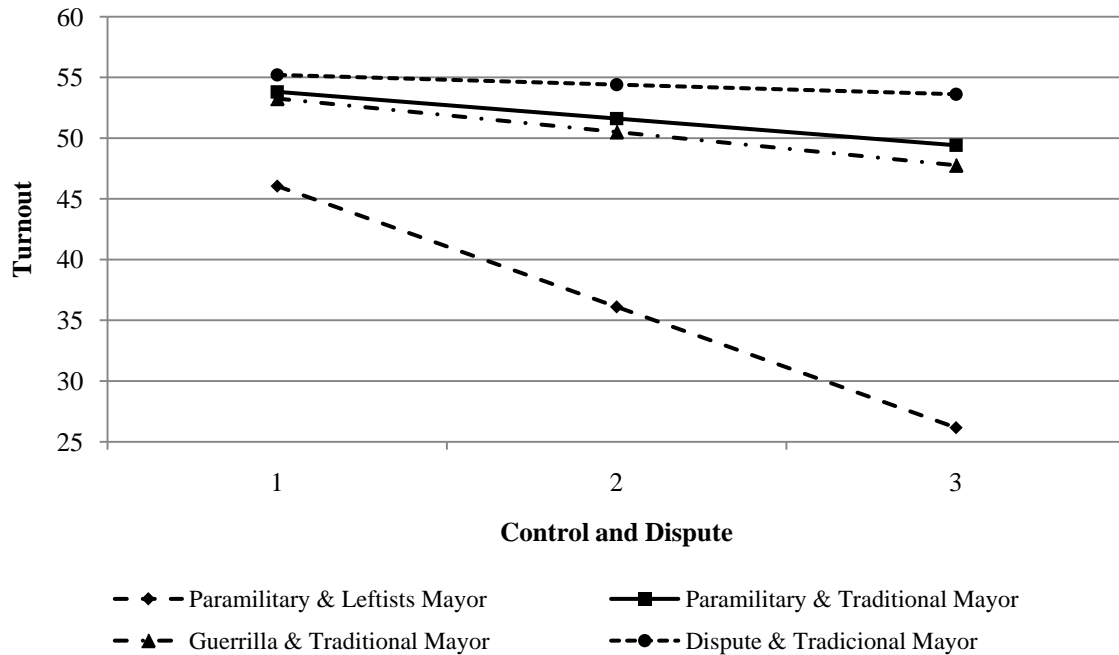
**Figure 14: Effects of Different Violent Contexts on the Expected Turnout for Municipalities Governed by Leftist and Traditional Parties**

Why does the reduction of the effect of paramilitary control on turnout in traditional municipalities is not as dramatic as the decrease in the impact of guerrilla control in "leftist" municipalities? Even though the Liberal and Conservative parties embody the status quo paramilitary bands were trying to preserve, from an ideological point of view traditional parties are certainly diverse. In addition, unlike guerrillas the link between paramilitaries and political parties has been instrumental and individualized. There is evidence some Liberal and Conservative politicians have developed alliances with paramilitaries in an attempt to defeat political competitors within their own parties (Gutiérrez 2007). For these reasons, some traditional mayors did not have the political blessing of paramilitaries, so in these municipalities the increase in paramilitary control may produce electoral demobilization.

Finally, interactions between dispute, leftist, and traditional incumbents displayed in Table 9 show that while the average effect of dispute is -0.969, in traditional municipalities this effect is only -0.796 and in places governed by the left it increases to -2.616. In other words, the clash between guerrillas and paramilitaries generates a small reduction of turnout in municipalities governed by the Liberal and Conservative parties, whereas it produces a bigger impact in places with a leftist government. These results describe the same pattern of the cross-level interactions between dispute and party identification discussed in Chapter 5.0, indicating that in disputed contexts the left is the main victim of political violence; however, the interaction between dispute and a leftist incumbent failed to reach conventional levels of significance ($p = .119$).

Socioeconomic variables show that, consistent with the literature on turnout, both *poverty* and *inequality* have a significant negative impact on electoral participation. Conversely, in the previous chapter contextual *poverty* was found to have a positive impact on the log-odds of voting; what can explain the direction change of this variable´s impact as we go from the individual to the aggregate analysis? The individual level model is capturing that out of the 76 municipalities included in the sample used for the analysis, in poor municipalities citizens have a higher likelihood of voting than in richer municipalities. On the other hand, the aggregate analysis may reflect a different situation as it includes all Colombian municipalities. The average municipality included in the sample used in the previous chapter is 10 points richer than the typical Colombian municipality. This reflects that surveys tend to exclude the poorest towns as they are located in hard to reach areas.[42] Results from the variable measuring a municipality's distance from the department capital reflects that peripheral towns have significantly lower

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[42] Municipalities located on a department's periphery (one standard deviation above the mean distance to the department capital) are about 15 points poorer than the average Colombian municipality.

turnout. So if distant municipalities are also the poorest,[43] the negative relationship between poverty and turnout that appears in the aggregate analysis may be caused by the presence of these towns. In short, results from the aggregate analysis on the relationship between poverty and turnout may be more reliable as they are supported by information from larger and more diverse group of townships.

A positive effect of *population* suggests that, consistent with the resources literature on turnout, electoral participation tends to be higher in urban areas because in those regions people have easier access to voting places and more resources that increase the chances of voting than in rural regions. A negative and significant impact of *altitude* and *distance to the department capital* on turnout indicates that, as expected, electoral participation is lower in hard to reach and distant areas. However, it also suggests that the lack of resources that contributes to decrease turnout in less populated (rural) municipalities may result from the fact that these towns are also the distant and hard to reach ones.

Again, compared to the individual level model for voting, the sign of one of the control variables appeared with the opposite sign in the aggregate model. Results displayed in Table 8 suggest the time invariant variable measuring a municipality's average *years of schooling* has a negative effect on turnout. Considering previous research on electoral participation (both at the individual and the aggregate levels), the positive relationship between *education* and the log-odds of voting presented in Chapter 5.0, and results from other control variables that might be correlated with education (e.g. *population*), a significant and negative relationship between *education* and turnout appears to be a very atypical outcome. Plümper and Troeger (2007) warn that RE performs better than FEVD if the correlation between the U and the time invariant

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[43] There is a positive and significant correlation (*r = .35, p < .000*) between distance to the department capital and poverty.

variables is high, but since this correlation cannot be observed they suggest comparing coefficients of the time invariant variables obtained from RE and FEVD models. If coefficients of time invariant variables do not vary much, results from the FEVD model are unbiased. If the difference is large, RE provides less biased and more efficient estimators of time invariant variables than FEVD. A comparison of the education coefficients obtained using RE and FEVD reveals that there is an important difference between both estimates (the FEVD estimate is 16 times larger), indicating the coefficient for education obtained in the RE model is a better estimate. This coefficient indicates that although education still has a negative effect on turnout it is not statistically significant.[44]

Finally, negative coefficients for the time dummies indicate that there was a significant reduction in the levels of turnout after 1988 (the baseline year). These results may indicate that, as has happened in other countries, the routinization of local electoral processes produced a reduction of turnout (Fornos et al. 2004). Thus, after the first local election, turnout started to decrease as the enthusiasm about the new institutions also diminished. However, the magnitudes of the coefficients reveal that the reduction in turnout was not incremental. In the 1994 elections turnout increased with respect to 1992 and 1997, probably as a consequence that in 1994 presidential and legislative elections were held, so the occurrence of national elections may have increased participation in local elections.[45] On the other hand, the coefficient for 1997 indicates that in that year participation reached its lowest level; this result might be a product of two events related to the evolution of the Colombian armed conflict. In 1997 the FARC announced

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[44] A comparison between the remaining time invariant variables (altitude and distance to the department capital) reveals the RE and FEVD estimates are not very different, therefore overall FEVD results are to be preferred to RE outcomes.

[45] In 1990 local and national elections were also held in the same year, yet, the year dummy for 1990 was dropped from the analysis due to collinearity.

they were planning to sabotage local elections (Ferro and Uribe 2002). During the same year paramilitary bands created a national federation and launched one of their biggest and more ambitious campaigns against the insurgency and the left. In other words, 1997 was the year in which local elections took place in a very unfavorable context due to the dispute between armed actors and the blocking of elections sat in motion by the FARC. Lastly, although turnout never reached the 1998 levels, in 2000 and 2003 it suffered an increase with respect to the 1990s levels. In sum, the effect of time on turnout may reveal the combined impact of a routinization of local elections, the mobilization effects of national elections, and the strong effect of political violence on electoral politics.

### 6.2.2 Electoral Results Models

Chapter 5.0 presented evidence indicating that vote intention for a right wing incumbent was affected by the identity of the armed actor dominating the municipality. In this section I will analyze to what extent the electoral success of a political party in mayoral elections is influenced by the armed actor dominating the region. If results obtained in the previous chapter hold at the aggregate level, I expect political parties close to the left to be more successful in guerrilla controlled areas, and conversely right wing parties to flourish in paramilitary dominated municipalities. Models presented in this section have as dependent variable the *ideological orientation of the winning party* and their functional form is the following:

$$y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 (\text{lagDV})_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{GvP})_{it} + \beta_3 (\text{C})_{it} + \beta_4 (\text{SC})_{it} + \beta_5 (\text{TI})_i + \beta_6 (\text{Year})_{it} + + u_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

$$y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 (\text{lagDV})_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{GvP})_{it} + \beta_3 (\text{lagDVxGvP})_{it} + \beta_4 (\text{C})_i + \beta_5 (\text{SC})_{it} + \beta_6 (\text{TI})_i + \beta_7 (\text{Year})_{it} + u_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Models on electoral results are identical except for the inclusion of an interaction between a variable capturing armed actors' level of control and the lagged dependent variable

130

(*incumbent party ideology*). Similar to the vote intention models presented in Chapter 5.0, violent contexts are measured using a single continuous variable (*guerrilla v. paramilitary*) capturing the local balance of power between guerrillas and paramilitaries at the municipal level. I anticipate *guerrilla versus paramilitary* to have a positive sign, because the dependent variable increases its values as the winning party moves from left to right, likewise *guerrilla versus paramilitary* goes from -4 to 4, where negative values represent different levels of guerrilla and positive scores describe various degrees of paramilitary control.[46]

Both models include the following control variables: *a lagged dependent variable* (lagDV), *competition* (C), a group of measures capturing socioeconomic characteristics (CS) of the municipality (*poverty*, *inequality*, *population*, and *coca plantations*), and the time invariable variables (TI) *education* and *political hegemony*. Finally, models include five year dummies. By including a lagged dependent variable, I attempt to control for both a possible endogenous relationship between armed actors' level of control and electoral results,[47] and for the effect of past electoral results on present electoral outcomes. As municipal *poverty* and *inequality* increases, I expect leftist parties will be more likely to win elections (Benton 2005; Queirolo 2008). Similarly, if results from Chapter 5.0 hold, an increase in municipal *education* will favors the left. Regarding the political controls, I anticipate *competition* will have a negative impact on the dependent variable, as political minorities (left) will have higher chances to win as political competition augments. On other hand, political hegemony will have a positive effect on electoral results, as in Colombia center-right parties (Liberal and Conservative) have enjoyed strong

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[46] Disputed municipalities were coded -1 when guerrillas show a slight advantage over paramilitaries, and 1 when paramilitaries are the armed actor having a minor advantage. Zero indicates absence of armed actors.
[47] If armed actors move to places where their political counterparts control political power, violent contexts will hardly have an impact on electoral results. If that is the case, including a lagged dependent variable will wash out the impact of *guerrilla v. paramilitary* on the dependent variable.

electoral support. Finally, the variable *coca* should have a negative sign if the popular belief that

coca plantations are located mainly in guerrilla controlled regions is true.

As expected, results presented in Table 10 indicate a positive and significant coefficient

for *guerrilla versus paramilitary*. In other words, as we move from guerrilla controlled

municipalities to paramilitary controlled towns the political party in charge of the local

government is closer to the right. However, the magnitude of the effect of *guerrilla versus*

*paramilitary* on the dependent variable is certainly small. If we go from a town controlled by

guerrillas to a municipality dominated by paramilitaries, the ideology of the winning party moves

to the right less than one unit (from 2.62 to 3.05).[48] Thus, on average, a radical variation in the

armed actor controlling a region does not represent a drastic ideological change in the party

governing the municipality. This result is certainly surprising given qualitative evidence

suggesting that changes in the controlling armed actors were accompanied by radical political

transformations (see Chapter 3.0); and results from the individual level models indicating that the

probability of supporting a right wing presidential candidature increased about 20 points from

guerrilla to paramilitary controlled regions.

What can explain the small effect of the variable *guerrilla versus paramilitary* on

electoral results?  A possible answer to this question has to take into account two elements. First,

as I already mentioned, many political transformations caused by armed actors were the

replacement of one political group for another political faction within the same party (Gutiérrez

2007). Therefore, in several cases the political impact of violent contexts on politics did not

represent a radical ideological change in local governments. Unfortunately this explanation

cannot be empirically tested because there are no data on the identity of partisan factions

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[48] Expected values were calculated holding all predictors equal to zero.

governing Colombian municipalities. Second, in many regions of the country the emerging of paramilitary bands caused a clear movement of local governments to the right, especially in those municipalities controlled by leftist parties like UP. However, since the number of municipalities in which the left was successful is small,[49] the radical ideological transformations of local governments caused by the emergence of paramilitary bands are not properly captured by a coefficient indicating an average effect. If the second answer is true, the interaction between armed actors' level of control and incumbent party ideology should indicate that the effect of *guerrilla versus paramilitary* will increase in those municipalities governed by a leftist mayor.

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[49] On average, only 2.5% of all Colombian municipalities are governed by a leftist party.

**Table 10: FEVD Models of Electoral Results (Winning Party Ideology), 1988 – 2003**

|  | Model 1 | Model 2 |
|---|---|---|
|  | Coefficient (SE) | Coefficient (SE) |
| Incumbent Party Ideology | -0.146 *** | -0.159 *** |
|  | (0.019) | (0.020) |
| Guerrilla v. Paramilitary | 0.054 *** | 0.157 *** |
|  | (0.007) | (0.035) |
| Guerrilla v. Paramilitary X Party's Ideology |  | -0.031 ** |
|  |  | (0.010) |
| Competition | 0.001 | 0.001 |
|  | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Poverty | 0.002 *** | 0.002 *** |
|  | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Inequality (GINI) | -0.476 *** | -0.470 *** |
|  | (0.063) | (0.063) |
| Population (ln) | 0.149 *** | 0.153 *** |
|  | (0.011) | (0.011) |
| Coca (ln) | 0.008 ** | 0.009 ** |
|  | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Education | -0.058 *** | -0.059 *** |
|  | (0.009) | (0.009) |
| Partisan Hegemony | 0.066 *** | 0.066 *** |
|  | (0.006) | (0.006) |
| 1990 | -0.020 | -0.019 |
|  | (0.029) | (0.029) |
| 1992 | 0.009 | 0.007 |
|  | (0.031) | (0.031) |
| 1997 | 0.015 | 0.012 |
|  | (0.028) | (0.028) |
| 2000 | -0.008 | -0.010 |
|  | (0.032) | (0.032) |
| 2003 | 0.155 *** | 0.152 *** |
|  | (0.032) | -0.032 |
| η | 1.000 *** | 1.000 *** |
|  | (0.022) | (0.022) |
| Constant | 2.837 *** | 2.840 *** |
|  | (0.114) | (0.115) |
| N | 3782 | 3782 |
| R2 | 0.554 | 0.555 |
| R2 Adjusted | 0.428 | 0.429 |

1994 dropped because of collinearity.
* p < .05; ** p <. 01; *** p < .001

Figure 15 presents the conditional impact of guerrilla versus paramilitary on electoral results as the incumbent party ideology moves from left to right. As expected, the effect of violent contexts are larger in municipalities governed by left or center left parties, this effect is in

fact three and two times larger respectively than the average effect presented in Model 1 (Table 9). Thus, if there is a radical change in the armed actor controlling a municipality (from -4 to 4) and the mayor represents a leftist party the expected ideological change in the governing party is of one unit along the five point ideology scale.[50] Results from the interactions also reveal that in municipalities governed by center-right parties the effect of *guerrilla versus paramilitary* is smaller than the average impact of this variable on the ideology of the winning party. In towns controlled by the right this variable does not reaches statistical significance.



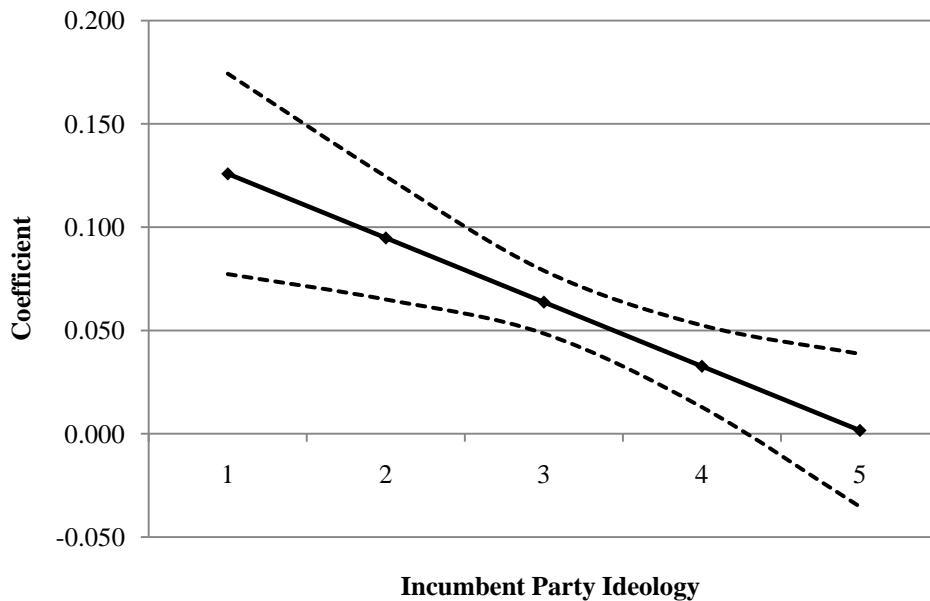**Figure 15: Effect of *Guerrilla v. Paramilitary* for Different Values of Incumbent Party Ideology**

Results from the interaction between armed actors' level of control and incumbent party ideology support the hypothesis presented in the introduction to this chapter, and they resemble

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[50] The expected change is from 2.3 to 3.3. These values were calculated holding all predictors equal to zero

the outcome obtained from the cross-level interaction between *guerrilla versus paramilitary* and citizens' partisan identity in Chapter 5.0. A parallel between that result and the one described in the previous paragraph suggests independents and leftist identifiers, as well as leftist governments, are more affected by violent contexts than militants of traditional parties and governments close to the right. In other words, militants of independent and leftist parties are more likely to change their political preferences to the right and leftist governments tend to disappear as right wing paramilitary bands increase their control. No matter if we talk about individuals or governments, these results highlight the vulnerability of the left in the context of Colombia's violent conflict. Regular people and politicians located on the left of the ideological spectrum appear as the main victims of political violence.

Moreover, these results also suggest that paramilitaries have had a greater electoral impact than guerrillas. My analysis indicate that among traditional party identifiers and in regions controlled by the right, the consolidation of guerrilla control did not led to radical political preference changes or government transformations. Although guerrillas attempt to undermine the existing status quo, these organizations achieved political influence in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Chapter 3.0). More importantly, in many cases they gained that influence through their social and political counterparts using less violence than paramilitaries. Paramilitaries on the other hand, emerged exclusively as a military organization devoted to using violent means against guerrillas and the advance of the left. In sum, this contrast between guerrillas and paramilitaries may explain why an increase in paramilitary control transforms into a greater political influence.

All control variables but political competition showed a significant effect on the dependent variables; so there is no possibly to say that closer elections increase the electoral

success of minority parties. However, a positive and significant impact of the time invariant variable partisan hegemony indicates that when a single party consistently wins the mayoral elections and as it obtains a larger the percentage of the total vote, the electoral success of the right increases. In sum, political hegemonies are not correlated with the electoral success of the left due to its minority status.

Regarding socioeconomic factors, the models indicate that in poorer municipalities winning parties are closer to the right. In contrast, greater inequality favors the electoral success of parties closer to the left. Are these results entirely contradictory? No. Although the left has traditionally targeted the poor, traditional party identities in Colombia remain stronger in less developed municipalities than in richer regions. Consequently, since the Liberal and Conservative parties are located on the center and center-right of the ideological spectrum, poverty may lead to the election of local mayors closer to the right. On the other hand, income inequality may favor the electoral success of the leftist parties since one of the main priorities of the political agenda of the left has been to tackle inequality (Queirolo 2008). In addition, poverty and inequality are not positively correlated.[51] So in municipalities with relatively high inequality levels leftist parties do not face the barrier of strong Liberal and Conservative identities existing in poor towns.

Population appears as positively correlated with rightist governments. Despite the recent success of the left in mostly urban and populated municipalities like Bogotá or Medellín, most of the municipalities in which parties like the UP achieved electoral success had populations under 100,000. Therefore, in urban and populated areas Liberal and Conservative parties obtain positive electoral outcomes. Results from the last socioeconomic variable, education, indicate

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[51] Although small, the correlation between these two variables is negative.

that in municipalities with higher average levels of schooling the left is more successful. A similar pattern was found in Chapter 5.0 between individual level education and vote intention for a right wing candidate. Thus, consistent with previous research (Glaser 2001; Shaffer 1982), higher levels of education may induce the acceptance of more liberal values and therefore the electoral preeminence of the left.

A positive and significant impact of the variable measuring coca plantations indicates that, unlike the popular belief, coca plantations are not correlated with the electoral success of the left. During the last decade, paramilitaries increased their involvement in the coca business; consequently coca plantations extended to several regions of Colombia beyond guerrilla controlled areas. In fact, results suggest coca resources are favoring political parties closer to the right, which make sense taking into account the traditional link between drug lords and paramilitaries.

Finally, results indicate that most time dummies are statistically insignificant. However the time dummy for 2003 appears to have a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable, meaning that in 2003 compared to the baseline year 1988, rightist parties were more successful. This result is very interesting because the 2003 local elections took place one year after Colombians elected a most rightist president. So it is possible that the movement towards the right of local politics described by the 2003 coefficient was the consequence of a radicalization of the electorate pushed by Uribe's victory (Gutiérrez 2003). Another interpretation for this result may be that, as consequence of paramilitary consolidation in the early 2000s, several Colombian municipalities moved to the right in the 2003 local elections.

## 6.3    DISCUSSION

This chapter offered empirical evidence suggesting that there is a relationship between violent contexts and political behavior at the municipal level. Here, I showed how as guerrillas and paramilitaries increase their levels of control turnout suffers a significant reduction. At the same time, this chapter found that electoral results are affected by the armed actor dominating a municipality. While the consolidation of insurgent control in a given region tends to favor the electoral success of the left, the emergence of paramilitary bands as the dominant armed actor contributes to the triumph of right wing parties. This chapter represents an important contribution to the literature on political behavior, particularly to the studies on turnout and electoral outcomes as it showed that beyond political and socioeconomic factors, violent contexts have a crucial role defining the magnitude of electoral mobilization and who wins elections.

Results from this chapter support the theory presented in Chapter 2.0 and overall they indicate that the findings discussed in the previous chapter also hold at the aggregate level. However, the analysis presented in this chapter makes clear that, at the municipal level, the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior has its own characteristics. Theories in the field of political behavior are usually formulated at the individual level because political opinions, decisions and actions are performed by individual citizens. However, as the sum of these actions creates an aggregate reality, political behavior theories tend to be tested both at the individual and aggregate levels. Studies of electoral participation are a paradigmatic case of a situation in which the same theory has an individual and aggregate dimension, backed by a common theory. What is more interesting about this "duality" is that in several occasions what works for individuals do not necessarily work at the aggregate level. Studies of electoral campaigns represent a classic example. While we know that campaigns actually change people´s

minds, the effect of campaigns on electoral outcomes is certainly limited (Finkel 1993; Shaw 1999). Thus, one of the more interesting contributions of this chapter is that it shows those aspects of the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior that perform differently at municipal versus the individual level.

This chapter revealed interesting contrasts between these two levels of analysis. First, unlike my general expectation in the municipal level analysis, disputed municipalities did not exhibit the lowest levels of turnout. Why? Because the fact that some citizens (identifiers of minority parties and the left) dramatically reduce their probability of voting as dispute increases, do not produce a strong reduction of turnout due to the small size of the electorate represented by these individuals. A second contrast between individual and aggregate level outcomes, also has to do with the small size of the left; this time in terms of local governments controlled by the left. While at the individual level the probability of supporting a right wing presidential candidate increased about 20 points from guerrilla to paramilitary controlled regions, at the municipal level a radical variation in the armed actor controlling a region did not produce a drastic ideological change in the party governing the municipality.

One of the main highlights of this chapter is that it shows how the effect of a violent context on electoral outcomes is mediated by the ideological identity of the governing party. Building on the argument introduced in Chapter 2.0 according to which political actions and opinions of minority party identifiers are more vulnerable to violent contexts, I proposed that armed actors municipal levels of control and the magnitude of their territorial dispute was supposed to have a greater effect on turnout and electoral results in municipalities governed by minority parties. This conditional argument found support in this chapter, and more importantly, I showed that leftist governments were the main victims of political violence in Colombia. In

municipalities governed by the left, the consolidation of paramilitaries generated the biggest turnout reduction and dramatic changes in the identity of the governing party. Through the analysis of the conditional effects of violent contexts, I was able to connect my dissertation with the particular evolution of a conflict in which the emergence of paramilitaries and the intensification of political violence is in part consequence of the electoral advance of leftist parties (see Chapter 3.0). This result is extremely important because for the first time there is quantitative evidence showing that, from an electoral point of view, the main victim of Colombian political violence has been the left. Before my analysis this statement was supported exclusively in case studies, anecdotal accounts, and qualitative analyses (Bonilla 1990; Dudley 2008)

# 7.0    CONCLUSIONS


This dissertation was inspired by a paradox faced by several developing countries the emergence of electoral democracy did not eliminate violence as a mechanism to settle political differences. In fact, numerous new democracies function under the threat of widespread political violence. Based on this contradiction, this investigation studied the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior in order to advance knowledge about the social logic of electoral politics. Specifically, the main goal of this dissertation was to study the effects of changes in the balance of power between contending armed actors on electoral participation, vote choices, and electoral results. This relationship was examined both at the individual and aggregate levels for the Colombian case, a country in which electoral democracy and a violent conflict have coexisted for decades.

Results from the individual level analysis showed that the territorial consolidation of right wing paramilitaries significantly reduced the individual probability of voting; yet, citizens living in contested areas exhibited the lowest probability of participating in local elections. Violent contexts also had a tremendous influence on vote intention. In fact, going from areas dominated by left wing insurgents to regions controlled by right wing paramilitary groups, citizens were more likely to support a presidential candidate located on the right of the ideological spectrum. In addition, the individual level analysis indicated that the effects of changes in the balance of power between contending armed actors on vote and vote choices were conditioned by

partisanship. Sympathizers of minority parties were more likely to be affected by violent contexts than traditional party identifiers. As "dispute" between armed actors increased independents and leftist identifiers significantly reduced their chances of voting; however, regardless of the dispute level, members of traditional parties exhibited almost the same probability of participating in local elections. Similarly, as we move from areas dominated by guerrillas to regions under paramilitary control, only minority party sympathizers experienced a significant increase in the probability of supporting a right wing incumbent. Among militants of the Liberal and Conservative parties this probability remained stable at a relatively high level.

The municipal level analysis indicated that the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior also exists at the aggregate level. Results indicated that there is a significant reduction in turnout as armed actors increase their territorial control. However, unlike the individual level analysis, an increase in the dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries did not produce the biggest decline in turnout. Electoral results are also affected by changes in the balance of power between armed actors. As municipalities went from being under strong guerrilla influence to paramilitary control, local governments moved toward the right. Nonetheless, the ideological movements of local governments proved to be relatively small. Finally, there was evidence of a conditional relationship between violent contexts, turnout and electoral results. In this case the ideological identity of the incumbent party was the moderating variable. In municipalities governed by a leftist mayor the consolidation of paramilitary control produced the biggest reduction in turnout and the local governments suffered an important movement towards the right.

Taken together, the results of my dissertation suggest that political violence is a very effective tool to model political behavior. Armed actors employ violence or the threat of its use

143

to shape individuals' political behavior by altering the expected value of certain political actions. Therefore, there is a direct effect of violent contexts on people's political behavior. In areas disputed by guerrillas and paramilitaries or when an armed actor consolidates its territorial control, people are discouraged from voting because political involvement may trigger violent reprisals; consequently citizens walk away from the polls as a mechanism to protect themselves from violence. Similarly, the threat of violence explains why people tend to support political parties and candidates backed by the armed actor dominating the area. Political dissent represents a risk to individuals' security, so voters are compelled to support candidates and political parties preferred by the dominant armed actor.

In addition, violent contexts may also have a direct effect on politicians, which in turn ends up affecting voters' behavior. In other words, armed actors also have an influence on citizens' political actions and preferences as well as on electoral results when they use violence to redefine political equilibriums. As I showed for the case of Apartadó, as the dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries reached a peak, electoral politics reached a deadlock because politicians realized participating in politics represented a deadly risk. As a result, there were no efforts to mobilize people to the polls which stimulated a tremendous reduction in electoral participation. Similarly, consolidation of territorial control of either guerrillas or paramilitaries contributed to the reduction of political competition resulting in the emergence of political hegemonies. For instance, qualitative evidence presented in Chapter 3.0 indicated that the consolidation of paramilitaries as a dominant actor in Apartadó represented the demise of leftist parties and the reduction in the number of political competitors. As the contextual literature has demonstrated, homogeneous political macro-environments contribute to increase electoral abstention (Gimpel and Lay 2005). Similarly, as competition decreased citizens had a limited

array of electoral options in dominated regions. Thus, beyond the threat of violence, people supported candidates favored by armed actors because they are the only options available.

This investigation also showed that the effects of violent contexts on political behavior are not homogeneous. In fact, as it was mentioned before, minority party sympathizers and municipalities governed by a leftist mayor were the most affected by changes in the balance of power between armed actors. These results are consistent with previous findings indicating that identifiers with political minorities and weak partisans are more affected by their social milieu than those individuals identified with mainstream parties and with strong partisan attachments (Canache et al. 1994; Finifter and Finifter 1989; Huckfeldt et al. 2005b; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987).

In addition to contributing to the literature on contextual effects, evidence suggesting that the impacts of violent contexts are conditioned by the political identity of individuals and governments is of a major relevance to understand the dynamics of political violence in Colombia. For the first time these results offer strong quantitative evidence indicating that leftist parties and sympathizers have been the main victims of political violence in Colombia. So far this assertion had been supported exclusively by descriptive analysis. Second, results from the conditional analyses support the idea that armed actors differ in terms of their strategies towards the political system, and capture the logic of the relationship between armed actors and electoral politics in Colombia during the last two decades.

Although this investigation clarifies that both guerrillas and paramilitaries have had a significant influence on citizens' political behavior and electoral politics, it also suggests that paramilitary bands played a greater role than the left wing insurgency in redefining local political power. To some extent, this supports the idea presented in Chapter 2.0 suggesting that there are

145

differences in armed actors' strategic orientations towards the political system. Paramilitaries' main objectives were to fight guerrillas, prevent the political advance of leftist parties, and capture local political power. In contrast, guerrillas' electoral involvement declined as the violent conflict intensified during the mid and late 1990s. Moreover, the evolution of each armed actor also contributes to understand why paramilitary violence appears as having the biggest effect on electoral politics. Guerrillas achieved influence in local power thanks to their links with social and political organizations, and not necessarily because they used tremendous amounts of political violence. In contrast, paramilitaries followed an inverse path: they used political violence to attain political power, particularly in those regions controlled by the left, then they captured social and political organizations to sustain the political preeminence obtained violently.

Finally, although my theory on the relationship between violent contexts, electoral participation, and vote choices found support both at the individual and the aggregate levels, there were interesting contrasts between the two levels of analysis. Violent contexts exhibited strongest effects on political behavior at the individual level compared to the aggregate level. For instance, changes in the armed actor dominating a given municipality led to radical vote intention changes but produced relatively small ideological transformations in local governments. These types of contrasts are common in the political behavior literature because what generates strong effects on a subgroup of a population may be not enough to produce radical changes on electoral outcomes (Finkel 1993). Here I showed that political behavior of minority party sympathizers is significantly affected by changes in violent contexts; however, since this subgroup of the population is relatively small, their opinion changes cannot produce

tremendous changes in the ideological identity of local governments. However, unlike campaign effects, the impact of political violence on electoral outcomes cannot be considered "minimal".

In terms of the dialogue between my dissertation and the literature on the social logic of politics, the results presented here support previous findings on the effects of social and political contexts on vote and vote choices. From a broad perspective, my study favored the idea that individuals tend to adjust their political opinions and actions making them consistent with the political views prevailing in their political milieu (Huckfeldt et al. 2004a; MacKuen and Brown 1987; Mondak et al. 1996). Evidence presented in this study also supported the argument that citizens located in contexts that are politically homogeneous are less likely to vote and tend to share the political views that reached a hegemonic status (Gimpel et al. 2004; Gimpel and Lay 2005). Finally, this dissertation presents strong evidence indicating that citizens belonging to political minorities are more likely to be affected by their social environment than those individuals who are part of a political majority (Canache et al. 1994; Finifter and Finifter 1989; Huckfeldt et al. 2005b; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987).

This investigation also adds to existing studies by opening a new line of research on the relationship between violent contexts and political behavior. This is one of the most important contributions of my study as I provide evidence to show that citizens' political actions are not only affected by socioeconomic environments and political discussion networks, but also by the way armed actors use violence to alter the expected value of certain actions. Therefore, armed actors shape the social context in which individuals take political decisions. The line of research opened by my dissertation is crucial to understand political behavior and the functioning of elections in a growing number of countries in which elections and political violence coexist.

147

Although this investigation represents and advancement over existing research, it is not without its limitations. First, the findings presented in this dissertation are only applicable to the Colombian case. In Latin America only Colombia suffers from an extended internal conflict; however, outside the region several countries are trying to consolidate or build democracies in the midst of a violent conflict. These are the cases of Iraq, Philippines and even India, just to mention a few countries. Thus, further comparative analyses are needed in order to extend the results of this study to other cases. In addition, testing the theoretical framework developed here in other countries will show to what extent the results presented here describe a general tendency or they reflect the particular characteristics of the Colombian case.

The case study presented in my dissertation was used only to illustrate the relationship between armed actors and elections, and their impact on the configuration of local power. Exploring new cases and developing a detailed comparison could present more light on these relationships, and it could offer more evidence on possible variations on the way armed actors relate to electoral politics in Colombia. Finally, my dissertation is limited to the analysis of the impact of violent contexts on citizens' behavior and electoral results. A natural extension of this study would be to analyze the impact of violent contexts on politicians' electoral strategies and behavior once elected to office. This expansion of this work would add to the present results and strengthen our understanding of the relationship between political violence and electoral politics in developing nations.

# APPENDIX A

## LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Interviewee 1. Former Colombian Army officer.

Interviewee 2. Local politician. Candidate to the local executive.

Interviewee 3. Community leader.

Interviewee 4. Former council member.

Interviewee 5. Former local politician.

Interviewee 6. Former council member, and former paramilitary.

Interviewee 7. Former council member.

Interviewee 8. Council member and leader of the banana workers union.

Interviewee 9. Community leader, and candidate to the City Council.

Interviewee 10. Former mayor of Apartadó.

**PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR TRAJECTORIES OF PARAMILITARY AND**

**GUERRILLA ACTIONS 1988 - 2003**

Model 1. Parameter Estimates for Trajectories of Paramilitary Actions 1988 - 1990

| Group | | Coeff. | | SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No Actions | Intercept | -0.827 | *** | 0.060 |
| Stable | Intercept | 0.715 | *** | 0.122 |
| | Linear Slope | -0.152 | *** | 0.044 |

***p < .001
BIC= -895.72 (N=2082)  BIC= -893.99 (N=1041)  AIC= -881.62

Model 2 Parameter Estimates for Trajectories of Guerrilla Actions 1988 - 1990

| Group | | Coeff. | | SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Moderate Increasing | Intercept | -0.567 | *** | 0.054 |
| | Linear Slope | 0.170 | *** | 0.021 |
| Stable | Intercept | 0.314 | *** | 0.098 |
| | Linear Slope | 0.414 | *** | 0.044 |

***p < .001
BIC= -2010.93 (N=2082) BIC= -2008.85 (N=1041)  AIC= -1994.00

Model 3. Parameter Estimates for Trajectories of Paramilitary Actions 1992 -1997

| Group | | Coeff. | | SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No actions | Intercept | -2.775 | *** | 0.248 |
| Moderate Increasing | Intercept | 8.708 | *** | 1.473 |
| | Linear Slope | -3.358 | *** | 0.414 |
| | Quadratic Slope | 0.269 | *** | 0.028 |
| Increasing | Intercept | 32.118 | *** | 4.621 |
| | Linear Slope | -11.698 | *** | 1.285 |
| | Quadratic Slope | 1.008 | *** | 0.084 |

***p < .001

BIC= -3232.74 (N=3123)  BIC= -3227.25 (N=1041)  AIC= -3202.51

Model 4. Parameter Estimates for Trajectories of Guerrilla Actions 1992 -1997

| Group | | Coeff. | | SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very Low Stable | Intercept | -1.112 | ** | 0.413 |
| | Linear Slope | 0.345 | ** | 0.116 |
| | Quadratic Slope | -0.021 | ** | 0.008 |
| Moderate Increasing | Intercept | 0.218 | | 0.185 |
| | Linear Slope | 0.271 | *** | 0.026 |
| Increasing | Intercept | -24.483 | *** | 2.644 |
| | Linear Slope | 7.555 | *** | 0.776 |
| | Quadratic Slope | -0.462 | *** | 0.052 |
| Decreasing | Intercept | 7.470 | *** | 0.362 |
| | Linear Slope | -0.395 | *** | 0.046 |

** p<.01, ***p < .001

BIC= -4616.84 (N=3123)  BIC= -4609.15 (N=1041)  AIC= -4574.51

Model 5. Parameter Estimates for Trajectories of Paramilitary Actions 1997 - 2003

| Group | | Coeff. | | SE |
|-------|---|--------|---|-----|
| Very Low Stable | Intercept | -0.503 | *** | 0.077 |
| Moderate | Intercept | 17.854 | *** | 4.066 |
| | Linear Slope | -2.082 | *** | 0.625 |
| | Quadratic Slope | 0.069 | ** | 0.024 |
| Increasing | Intercept | 58.214 | *** | 11.747 |
| | Linear Slope | -10.310 | *** | 1.868 |
| | Quadratic Slope | 0.472 | *** | 0.072 |
| Decreasing | Intercept | 149.606 | *** | 10.079 |
| | Linear Slope | -19.855 | *** | 1.574 |
| | Quadratic Slope | 0.672 | *** | 0.060 |

***p < .001

BIC = -5416.75 (N= 3123) BIC = -5409.06 (N= 1041) AIC= -5374.42

Model 5. Parameter Estimates for Trajectories of Guerrilla Actions 1997 - 2003

| Group | | Coeff. | | SE |
|-------|---|--------|---|-----|
| Very Low Stable | Intercept | -7.851 | *** | 1.116 |
| | Linear Slope | 1.281 | *** | 0.176 |
| | Quadratic Slope | -0.050 | *** | 0.007 |
| Low Stable | Intercept | -10.360 | *** | 1.560 |
| | Linear Slope | 1.933 | *** | 0.250 |
| | Quadratic Slope | -0.075 | *** | 0.010 |
| Moderate Decreasing | Intercept | -24.889 | *** | 2.637 |
| | Linear Slope | 4.867 | *** | 0.420 |
| | Quadratic Slope | -0.199 | *** | 0.016 |
| High Increasing - Decreasing | Intercept | -86.580 | *** | 6.014 |
| | Linear Slope | 15.120 | *** | 0.953 |
| | Quadratic Slope | -0.591 | *** | 0.036 |

***p < .001

BIC = -4912.10 (N= 3123) BIC = -4903.31 (N= 1041) AIC= -4863.73

# APPENDIX C

## LEVEL-1 VARIABLES

*Age.* This variable was measured as the respondent's number of years.

*Gender.* This is a dummy variable coded 1 if male and 0 if female.

*Education.* This variable measures each respondent's years of formal education.

*Socioeconomic status.* This is an index of individuals' ownership of nine consumption goods. These goods are: television, refrigerator, conventional telephone, cellular telephone, automobile, washing machine, microwave, indoor running water, indoor bathroom, and personal computer. This index is measured in a 0 to 100 scale.

*System support.* It is a measure of legitimacy of the political system developed by Muller (Seligson 2002). This variable is an index based on five items, each scored on a 1 to 7 scale. These items "attempt to tap Easton's generalized notion of 'diffuse support' and Lipset's notion of 'legitimacy' rather than specific support for any given administration" (Seligson 2002: 165). The five items ask: 1) "To what extent do you believe the courts of justice in your country guarantee a fair trial?" 2) "To what extent do you respect the political institutions in your country?" 3) "To what extent do you believe that basic citizen rights are well protected by your country's political system?" 4) "To what extent are you proud to live under the political system

of your country?,"and 5) "to what extent do you think one should support political system of your country?" Answers to these questions were averaged and transformed into a 0 to 100 scale.

*External political efficacy*. This variable measures to what extent an individual has a sense that his or her electoral participation can influence governmental action. This concept was measured using the question "do you think that voting can lead to improvement in the future or do you believe that no matter how one vote, things never change?" The question was coded 1 if the respondent answered "the vote can change things" and 0 if she chose "it does not matter how you vote".

*Political sophistication*. This variable measures the quantity and organization of a person's political cognitions (Luskin 1987). The variable is an index based on four questions on general politics. These questions are: 1) "Do you remember the name of the President of the United States?". 2) Do you remember how many departments are there in Colombia?" 3) "What is the term of the Colombian President?" And 4) "do you remember the name of the President of Brazil?" Positive answers were added and transformed into a 0 to 100 scale.

*Political engagement.* This measure captures an individual's level of involvement in local politics. Political engagement is an index based on three questions on participation in public activities. These questions are: 1) During the last 12 months, have you attended to meetings called by the mayor? 2)  During the last 12 months, have you attended to municipal council sessions? 3) During the last 12 months, have you attended to debates on the local budget? Positive answers were added and transformed into a 0 to 100 scale.

*Traditional Party identification.* This is a dummy variable coded 1 if an individual self identified herself with the Liberal or the Conservative parties and 0 otherwise.

*Current sociotropic evaluation of the economy.* This variable captures respondents' opinion on the current situation of the national economy. It is based on the following question: What is your evaluation of the state of the national economy? Individuals had 5 response options in which 1 was "very good" and 5 was "very poor". The scale was inverted and transformed into a 0 to 100 scale.

*Prospective sociotropic evaluation of the economy*. This variable captures respondents' opinion on the future situation of the national economy. It is based on the following question: Do you think that in the following year the state of the national economy will be better, the same, or worst than today? Individuals had 3 response options in which 1 was "better,"2 was "the same" and 3 was "worst". This scale was inverted and transformed into a 0 to 100 scale.

# APPENDIX D

## INDEPENDENT VARIABLES USED IN CHAPTER 6

*Leftist Mayor.* This is a dummy variable coded 1 if the municipality´s mayor represents a leftist party and 0 otherwise.

*Traditional Mayor.* This is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the municipality´s mayor represents the Liberal or Conservative parties and 0 otherwise.

*Political Competition.* This measure captures the closeness of an electoral race. It is calculated as the difference between 100 and the percentage of votes obtained by the winner candidate. Higher values of this variable indicate a more competitive or close electoral race.

*Partisan Hegemony.* This variable is a 6 point scale capturing the level of partisan control for each municipality between 1988 and 2003. The coding of this variable is based on the criteria defined by Rodríguez-Raga and Gómez-Albarello (2007). The variable's scores capture the following situations:

0: When partisan control has shifted from one party to another during the period.

1: When a party has consistently obtained between 50 and 60 percent of the votes.

2: When the level of control has oscillated from 61 to 70 percent.

3: When a party has consistently obtained between 71 and 80 percent of the votes.

4: When the level of control has oscillated between 81 to 90 percent of the votes.

5: When a party has consistently obtained between 91 and 100 percent of the votes.

*Poverty* (Unsatisfied Basic Needs). This is an index that identifies the proportion of households having one or more unsatisfied basic needs (Feres and Mancero 2001). The basic needs considered by the index are: adequate living space, adequate provision of utilities, number of persons per room, household income, and household members' level of education (controlled by age). This variable is measured in a 0 to 100 scale, in which higher values represent an elevated level of poverty.

*Inequality* (GINI). This is a coefficient measuring the distribution of income. This variable is measured between 0 and 1, where low values indicate a more equal distribution of income, with 0 representing perfect equality, while higher Gini values indicate more unequal distribution of income, with 1 corresponding to perfect inequality.

*Education*. This variable measures the population's average years of schooling of a given municipality. This is an average for the entire period of analysis and it is based on data from the 1990s.

*Coca (ln).* This variable is the natural log of the number of hectares of coca plantations existing in a given municipality.

*Population (ln)*. This measure is the natural log of the municipality's number of residents.

*Altitude (ln)*. This variable is the natural log of a measure capturing municipalities' elevation above sea level.

*Distance to department's Capital*. This variable captures the distance, in kilometers, from each municipality to its departmental capital.

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163

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