Bias in the Evaluation of Violence Against Civilians: Cognitive Dissonance and Moral Disengagement in Colombia

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Abstract

How do individuals' relative preferences for one side of the conflict shape their evaluations of violence against civilians? I argue that people reach moral judgements by combining appraisals of the perpetrator with evaluations of the abuse; the latter depend on the violence's cause, its consequences, and who bears responsibility for it. When violence is judged negatively but its perpetrator positively, individuals experience cognitive dissonance. To reduce it, they adjust their judgement of the abuse using moral disengagement, describing the violence as militarily necessary, minimizing how harmful it is, or placing responsibility for it on individual fighters. An online survey experiment in Colombia in which individuals read a news story about civilian targeting allegedly perpetrated by the state or guerrillas suggests that people justify lenient punishments for their preferred side by characterizing that side's violence as less harmful and less likely to be the responsibility of group leadership.

Word Count:

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"There are narratives that justify [war] crimes ...
whether [the perpetrator] is the state or the guerrilla."[1]

Introduction

People around the world hold polarized stances regarding wartime violence which causes civilian casualties. For example, according to a nationally representative March 2024 Pew Research Center survey, 21% of adults in the United States say that Israel's conduct in its campaign against Hamas since October 7th, 2023 has been "completely acceptable;" conversely, 20% indicate that it has been "completely unacceptable." According to the same survey, 62% of U.S. Jews believe that Israel's conduct is "somewhat/completely acceptable," but only 5% of U.S. Muslims agree (Mohamed 2024). A March 2024 survey from the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research indicates that 94% of people living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank believe Israel has committed war crimes in the conflict; only 10% think Hamas has (PCPSR 2024).[2] In contrast, a representative survey conducted by Pew Research Center in April 2024 suggests that only 19% of Israelis think that Israel's military response against Gaza has gone "too far" (Smerkovich 2024). How do individuals' relative preferences for one side of a conflict over the other shape their evaluations of violence against civilians?

Research from contexts as diverse as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Burundi, and Colombia suggests that people's responses to civilian targeting are shaped by whether their partisan, religious, national, and/or ethnic identity aligns with that of the perpetrator (Condra and Shapiro 2012; Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013; Samii 2013; Silverman 2019; Tellez 2020; Mironova and Whitt 2022; Levy 2023).[3] At the same time, there is evidence that civilian targeting is widely seen as morally wrong (e.g. Wood 2003; ICRC 2016; Levy 2022), and even people living far from the abuse oppose it and prefer tactics which limit civilian casualties (Johns

[1] Colombian social leader interview with author, spring 2022

[2] Surveys in the Gaza Strip were restricted to areas where there was no daily fighting.

[3] Characteristics of the violence and combatants' involvement in it also shape individuals' evaluations of the abuse (Sagan and Valentino 2017; Pechenkina, Bausch and Skinner 2019; Dill and Schubiger 2021; Levy 2022; Kao and Revkin 2023), as do people's values and attitudes toward the victims (Sagan and Valentino 2017; Rathbun and Stein 2020; Bloom et al. 2020) as well as their gender and exposure to international law (Wallace 2019; Hadzic and Tavits 2019).

and Davies 2019; Dill and Schubiger 2021; Han et al. 2021). So how do people come to terms with violence against civilians when it is committed by their side?

It may seem as though motivated reasoning, which suggests that people use their reasoning abilities to reach their desired conclusions (Kunda 1990), offers a simple answer. Recent research on the topic has found that individuals' willingness to acknowledge facts depends on whether the evidence aligns with their political party's policy positions or is endorsed by members of that party (Taber and Lodge 2006; Nyhan and Reifler 2010; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010; Druckman and McGrath 2019; Guay and Johnston 2022).[4] However, while motivated reasoning can explain why people's judgements of violence differ based on their alignments with the perpetrator, it does not offer guidance about which thought processes help them obtain these conclusions. In other words, theories of motivated reasoning do not provide insight into which pieces of evidence are more influential in helping people reach their desired conclusions about their preferred side's wartime violence. The theory I offer here, in contrast, generates predictions about which justifications people rely on.

I draw on work from psychology (e.g. Hester and Gray 2020; Malle 2021) to argue that moral judgements about civilian targeting combine judgements of the actor with judgements of the action. Judgements of the perpetrator depend on individuals' relative preferences for one side of the conflict, whereas judgements of the violence depend on its cause, its consequences, and who bears responsibility for it. When the violence is assessed negatively but the perpetrator is evaluated positively, individuals experience cognitive dissonance (Bandura 1999, 2015). To reduce this dissonance, they justify the abuse using moral disengagement, a form of reasoning which allows people to maintain a positive view of themselves despite engaging in or supporting immoral behavior (e.g. Bandura 1999; Moore 2015). More precisely, I argue that they rationalize the violence with reference to 1) its cause (characterizing it as militarily necessary), 2) its consequences (portraying it as less harmful), or 3) who bears responsibility for it (blaming individual perpetrators rather than group leadership). People

[4]Even when people do get the facts right, they still attribute responsibility to the other side (Bisgaard 2015, 2019).

with the strongest preferences experience the greatest cognitive dissonance and utilize the most moral disengagement.

I test the implications of this novel theoretical framework with an online factorial survey experiment in Colombia in which respondents are presented with a news article about a recent act of violence against civilians committed either by FARC dissidents or the Colombian Armed Forces. The results suggest that people justify lighter punishments for perpetrators on the side of the conflict they prefer by characterizing that side's violence against civilians as less harmful and less likely to be the responsibility of armed group leadership. In contrast, they do not characterize violence committed by their preferred side as less morally wrong or more militarily necessary.

This project makes several contributions. First, while prior work demonstrates that people respond less negatively to civilian targeting when they identify with the perpetrator (e.g. Condra and Shapiro 2012; Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013), I explore how people justify their support for actors that have engaged in morally objectionable violence. Understanding such justifications is crucial to uncovering the reasons why polarization surrounding wartime civilian targeting continues in spite of evidence of abuse. It is also a first step to discerning which forms of armed group or transitional justice messaging may nudge people's attitudes in a more reconciliatory or inflammatory direction. Second, the model of moral judgement introduced here may have broad applicability to a range of political phenomena about which people reach moral evaluations, such as corruption and leaders' extramarital affairs. Indeed, prior work on moral judgement in political science has primarily focused on variation in moral beliefs across different people (Kertzer et al. 2014; Kalmoe and Mason 2022; Nussio 2023; Jung and Clifford 2024) rather than on a unifying model of moral judgement.

Theory

I focus on two components of moral judgement: evaluations of moral wrongfulness and assessments of appropriate punishment. I argue that moral judgement is a product of judgements of actors, such as armed groups, and judgements of actions, such as violence

against civilians. People reach less harsh moral judgements when violence is committed by their preferred side; its cause is just, i.e., it is militarily necessary; its consequences are minimal, i.e., it harms relatively few civilians; or individual fighters are responsible, i.e., group leadership is not. When people are faced with civilian targeting perpetrated by their preferred side, their positive judgement of the perpetrator may conflict with their negative judgement of the violence. This inconsistency causes cognitive dissonance, which they resolve with the use of moral disengagement; this helps them alter their characterizations of the violence. People with stronger relative preferences have more positive judgements of perpetrators, experience more cognitive dissonance, and utilize more moral disengagement.

There are three scope conditions for this theory. First, there must be a strong norm against violence against civilians. Thus, I exclude conflicts with extreme intergroup animosity, such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, or mass killings based on categorical victim profiles. In such conflicts, the norm against civilian targeting may be weaker, so people may not feel a need to justify the violence with moral disengagement.[5] Given the exclusion of these conflicts, I do not examine the victim-blaming form of moral disengagement. Second, I focus on conflicts in which violence against civilians is common and publicized, meaning that neither armed groups nor civilians can plausibly deny that violence has occurred. Third, the war must feature two fundamentally opposing sides.

Moral Judgements of Violence Against Civilians

"Moral judgement" consists of evaluations of both moral wrongfulness and appropriate punishment (Malle 2021).[6] Indeed, people seek punishment which is proportional to the moral magnitude of a violation (for a summary, see Jackson, Choi and Gelfand 2019). For example, they approve of harsher punishment for combatants whose engagement in conflict

[5]It is not always clear when a conflict is accurately classified as, for example, a genocide. See Harff (2003) for a summary of contestation over the term and Jones (2010) for examples of cases of contested genocides.

[6]Malle (2021) characterizes evaluations of punishment as "almost" moral judgements because they are tied to assessments of blame. In Malle's framework, there are two other components of moral judgement: evaluations of actions as bad and norm judgements about whether the actions are forbidden. All civilian targeting is "bad" and "forbidden," so I do not focus on these elements of moral judgement.

is morally objectionable (Kao and Revkin 2023), and they support harsh punishment in response to immoral criminal violence (e.g. García-Ponce, Young and Zeitzoff 2022; Dow et al. 2023). I argue that moral judgement is a product of judgement of the actor (in this case, the perpetrator) and judgement of the action (in this case, the civilian targeting).

Judgements of Actors

The perceived character of actors shapes moral judgements (e.g. Uhlmann, Pizarro and Diermeier 2015; Helzer and Critcher 2018). As Hester and Gray (2020) summarize, "when people make moral judgements in everyday life, they usually know both what someone did (i.e., their act) and who they are (i.e., their identity) – and *who* often matters more than *what*" (p. 217). Indeed, as discussed above, people react less negatively to civilian targeting and seek reduced punishment for it when they share an identity with the perpetrator (e.g. Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013; Mironova and Whitt 2022).[7]

I suggest that an individual need not actively support a perpetrator to reach less harsh moral judgements of that perpetrator's violence compared to similar violence committed by the other side of the war; they must merely relatively prefer one side. More specifically, for people to have "relative preferences," they must have attitudes toward each side. They must be able to rank these attitudes as more or less positive. Because it is possible for individuals to not like either side of a war, relative preference is continuous. For example, one person could strongly support side A and strongly oppose side B, and another person could have a moderately negative attitude toward side A but an extremely negative attitude toward side B. Both would prefer side A, but one more strongly. While both would reach less harsh moral judgements of side A's violence compared to side B's, I argue that the person with the stronger preference would reach even less harsh moral judgement of side A compared to the person with the weaker preference.[8]

- *Relative Preference & Wrongfulness Hypothesis:* The stronger individuals' preferences

[7]Attitudes toward perpetrators may also be shaped by, for example, exposure to violence or receipt of governance. In other words, attitudes may be endogenous to conflict.

[8]I do not assume that individuals have preferences for some groups on one side over other actors on the same side; people likely do not have sufficient information for such a preference.

for one side are, the less likely they are to believe that violence against civilians committed by their preferred side is morally wrong compared to when it is committed by the other side.

- *Relative Preference & Punishment Hypothesis:* The stronger individuals' preferences for one side are, the less likely they are to believe that the perpetrators should be harshly punished when violence against civilians is committed by their preferred side compared to when it is committed by the other side.

Judgements of Actions

Moral judgement is not only a product of judgements of actors but also of judgements of actions (Haidt 2001; Schein and Gray 2018; Malle 2021). Indeed, varying elements of an action affects moral judgements (e.g. Waldmann and Dieterich 2007; Greene et al. 2009). I focus here on three elements of civilian targeting which may shape moral judgements: cause, consequences, and who bears responsibility.

In terms of the cause or purpose of the violence, evidence suggests that actors are blamed less for wrongdoing when they have "valid" reasons for engaging in it (Monroe and Malle 2019). Similarly, not having an obligation to prevent wrongdoing mitigates blame (Malle, Guglielmo and Monroe 2014). As such, people are more likely to support torture when it is portrayed as effective (Kearns and Young 2020) and more likely to support attacks that cause civilian casualties when they also offer military benefits (Press, Sagan and Valentino 2013; Sagan and Valentino 2017; Dill, Sagan and Valentino 2022). Most broadly, violence serves a valuable cause if it is not gratuitous i.e. if it contributes to winning the war.

- *Necessity Hypothesis:* People who believe that violence against civilians is necessary for the achievement of military goals are less likely to believe that:
  - *a:* the violence is morally wrong
  - *b:* its perpetrators should be strongly punished

The consequences of an action also shape moral judgement. Specifically, wrongdoing is condemned proportionally to the perceived harm it inflicts (e.g. Cushman 2013; Schein and

Gray 2018). Although there are various ways to measure the harm that violence inflicts on civilians, a simple heuristic is the number of people killed. Indeed, academics, militaries, and human rights groups quantify harm to civilians by counting the number of deaths (e.g. Seybolt, Aronson and Fischhoff 2013; Wilke and Naseemi 2022).[9]

- *Harmfulness Hypothesis:* People who believe that violence against civilians causes more harm [casualties] are more likely to believe that:
  - *a:* the violence is morally wrong
  - *b:* its perpetrators should be strongly punished

Lastly, moral judgement is correlated with perceived responsibility for a wrongful action. There are two broad categories of combatants who can be responsible for wartime targeting: the fighters who engage in the violence, or the leaders who order it. Individual fighters are responsible for violence if it occurs against the wishes of group leaders (Wood 2018; Hoover Green 2016). In contrast, leaders are responsible if the targeting is part of a deliberate strategy of the group, even if it is not explicitly ordered (e.g. Downes 2008; Cohen 2013). I suggest that people alter their evaluations of the violence based on who bears responsibility for it, reaching harsher moral judgements of civilian targeting when group leadership is responsible. In these cases, any act of violence is only one example of a more systematic pattern which likely inflicts more harm than an isolated instance of abuse. Relatedly, moral judgement is correlated with agency, i.e., the ability to plan and excute an action (e.g. Gray and Wegner 2010; Schein and Gray 2018); civilian targeting which is part of a large-scale strategy requires more agency and is thus judged more harshly.[10]

- *Responsibility Hypothesis:* People who believe that armed group leadership is responsible for the violence are more likely to believe that:
  - *a:* the violence is morally wrong

[9]Not all violence against civilians is fatal, and non-fatal forms of civilian targeting may be considered more unethical than killing if they violate stronger norms (Levy 2022).

[10]I assume that people see group leadership as among the "perpetrators" to be punished when they are responsible. Alternatively, if people see only the fighters that directly engaged in the violence as "perpetrators," they may seek reduced punishment when leadership is responsible (Levy 2022).

– *b:* its perpetrators should be strongly punished

Figure 1 summarizes the broad outlines of the theory thus far: moral judgements of civilian targeting (evaluations of its moral wrongfulness and the appropriate punishment for it) build on judgements of the perpetrator (whether that perpetrator is on an individual's preferred side) and judgements of the violence (whether it is militarily necessary, how harmful it is, and whether leadership is responsible for it).

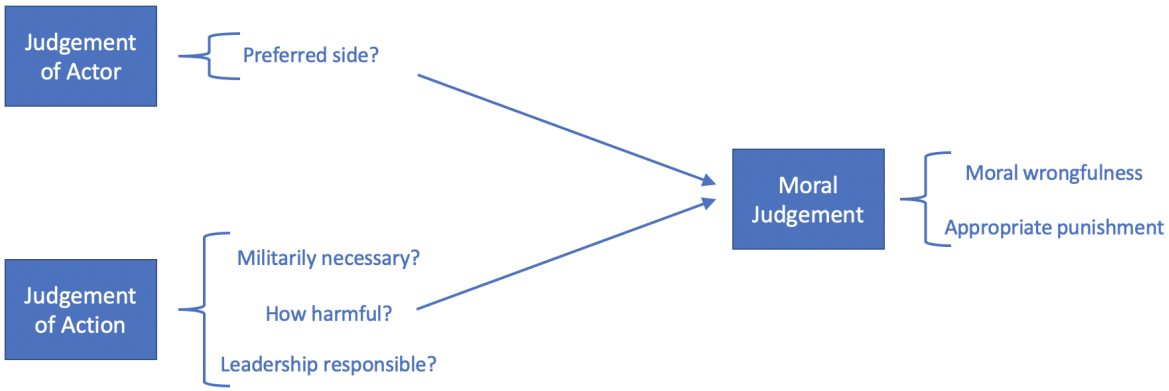


Figure 1: Moral Judgements of Violence Against Civilians

Moral Judgement and Moral Disengagement

I suggest that judgements of the actor also shape judgements of the action; in other words, people reach less negative judgements of the violence when the perpetrator is on their preferred side. There are two reasons. First, it is rarely straightforward for regular people, who have neither access to classified information nor detailed understanding of armed group tactics or structures, to determine how militarily necessary violence is, how much harm it causes, or who is ultimately responsible for it. Doing so is especially difficult when narratives about civilian targeting are politicized. The identity of the perpetrator is therefore a heuristic.[11] Second, given the strong moral norm against civilian targeting, people experience discomfort supporting an armed actor which engages in unethical tactics. This prompts them to adjust their evaluation of the action.

Individuals who engage in unethical behavior are perceived as unethical people (e.g.

[11] For a summary of how heuristics work, see Steenbergen and Colombo (2018).

Malle, Guglielmo and Monroe 2014; Malle 2021). Thus, when soneone's preferred side engages in immoral violence, he or she is faced with a conflict between judgements of the action and actor: the action and its perpetrators are "bad," but the actor is "good" or "less bad" than the other side. This conflict introduces cognitive dissonance, which occurs when "inconsistency between two cognitions creates an aversive state akin to hunger or thirst that gives rise to a motivation to reduce the inconsistency" (Cooper and Carlsmith 2015, p. 76). Civilian targeting is never wholly ethical, so people always experience some cognitive dissonance when their preferred side commits civilian targeting. Though they cannot resolve the dissonance, they can reduce it by minimizing the inconsistency.

To do so, people alter their judgement of the action through moral disengagement, "the disengagement of moral self-sanctions from inhumane conduct" (Bandura 1999, p. 193). This cognitive process allows people to maintain a positive view of themselves despite engaging in (e.g. Bandura 1999; Moore 2015) or supporting wrongful behavior, particularly during war (e.g. McAlister 2001; Aquino et al. 2007; Leidner et al. 2010; Gino and Galinsky 2012; Kalmoe and Mason 2022). The theory of moral disengagement makes clear precisely why changing one' judgement of the action is so important: engaging in or supporting immoral action destabilizes one's understanding of not only the armed actor but also one's own character (Roccas, Klar and Liviatan 2006; Wohl, Branscombe and Klar 2006). Importantly, people are more likely to utilize moral disengagement when they feel psychologically close to the actors, glorify them, or stand to benefit from their actions (Leidner et al. 2010; Gino and Galinsky 2012; Paharia, Vohs and Deshpandé 2013).[12] In other words, people with stronger relative preferences experience more cognitive dissonance and use more moral disengagement.

I focus on three forms of moral disengagement which reflect the determinants of moral judgement visualized in Figure 1: people can justify a wrongful action with reference to its cause, its consequences, or who bears responsibility for it. These forms of moral disengagement are not exhaustive, and people may rely on only some of them. Indeed, many studies focus

[12]Other literature sees moral disengagement as a cognitive predisposition or orientation (Moore 2015).

only on specific forms of moral disengagement (e.g. Leidner et al. 2010; Paharia, Vohs and Deshpandé 2013; Kalmoe and Mason 2022).

In the first form of moral disengagement, people characterize the action as serving a worthy purpose, such as avoiding greater harm (Bandura 1999, 2015). Given that wartime violence serves a worthy purpose when it is contributes to military gains, people may justify their side's violence by characterizing it as militarily necessary. Lyall, Blair and Imai (2013) suggest but do not directly test a similar theory, arguing that members of one's in-group who engage in civilian targeting are seen as having been forced by the situation to do so.

- *Relative Preference & Necessity Hypothesis:* The stronger individuals' preferences for one side are, the more likely they are to believe that violence against civilians committed by their preferred side is necessary for the achievement of military goals compared to when it is committed by the other side.

In the second form of moral disengagement, people reinterpret the outcome of the action, distorting, denying, or disregarding its harmful effects (Bandura 1999, 2015). In evaluating civilian targeting, they would minimize the volume of civilian casualties. For example, in a study of Americans' attitudes toward the war in Iraq under a Republican president, most people correctly identified the number of casualties. However, Democrats interpreted this number as "large" rather than "small," like Republicans (Gaines et al. 2007).

- *Relative Preference & Harmfulness Hypothesis:* The stronger individuals' preferences for one side are, the less likely they are to believe that violence against civilians committed by their preferred side causes extensive harm compared to when it is committed by the other side.

In the third form of moral disengagement, people displace or diffuse responsibility for the wrongful action (Bandura 1999, 2015). While existing work on moral disengagement focuses on how individuals avoid responsibility by blaming leadership figures (Bandura 1999), I have suggested that civilian targeting for which group leadership is responsible is seen as

more morally objectionable. Thus, to justify violence committed by their preferred side, individuals may place responsibility on fighters rather than group leadership.

- *Relative Preference & Responsibility Hypothesis:* The stronger individuals' preferences for one side are, the less likely they are to believe that armed group leadership is responsible for the violence committed by their preferred side compared to when it is committed by the other side.

Figure 2 presents this updated theory of moral judgement; it does not contradict any of the arguments summarized in Figure 1, but rather visualizes additional hypotheses. As Figure 2 makes clear, people could reach judgements of the action before or after they reach moral judgements. On the one hand, it is possible that judgements of the actor affect judgements of the action, and only after that do people reach their final moral judgements. If so, then cognitive dissonance is resolved prior to moral judgements. Indeed, some studies suggest that moral disengagement "mediates the effects of individual-level predictors [like relative preference] on morally problematic outcomes" (Moore 2015, p. 201). On the other hand, it is also possible that individuals first evaluate the actor, then make moral judgements, and finally seek reasons for those moral judgements in their judgements of the action. If so, then cognitive dissonance is resolved only after moral judgements are reached. Ultimately, as Kalmoe and Mason (2022) ask, "does moral disengagement cause violent views, or do violent views force a moral rationalization? Probably both." Unfortunately, in a survey setting, it is impossible to discern which judgements individuals reach first. Given this difficulty, I do not interpret evaluations of the action as *causes* of moral judgements or as *mediators* of the relationship between relative preferences and moral judgements; both of these terms imply a particular directional relationship between the variables. Rather, I characterize them as *justifications* of the violence.

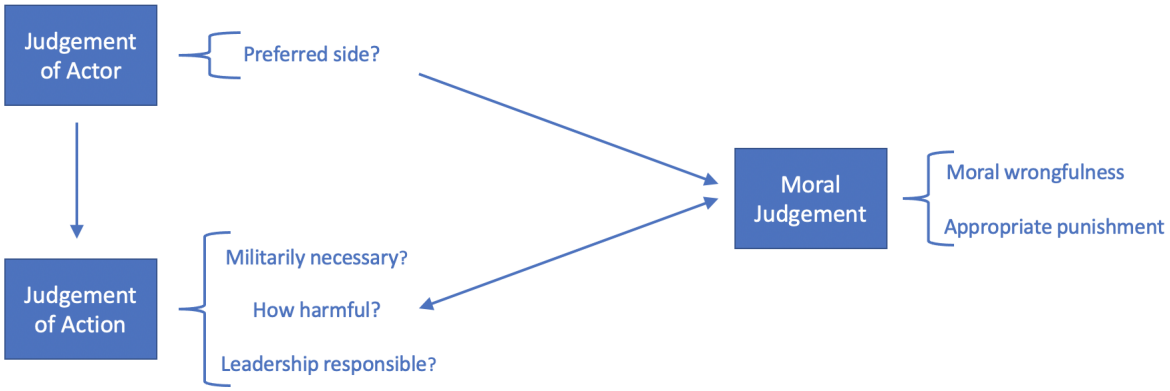


Figure 2: Moral Judgements when Moral Disengagement is Taken Into Account

Research Design

Case Selection

Since the 1960s, Colombia has been embroiled in a conflict involving the state, leftist guerrillas, pro-state paramilitaries, and criminal groups. The country is deeply divided over the conflict and civilian targeting, making it an effective case upon which to test the theory.

Colombia's Truth Commission, established in a 2016 peace accord between the FARC and the government, concluded that over 90% of conflict fatalities were civilians. All armed actors have engaged in violence against civilians (La Comisión de la Verdad 2022). Colombia is reckoning with this abuse; transitional justice institutions are prominently covered in the news (e.g. Redacción Judicial 2024; Morales Castillo 2024), as are proceedings in international institutions regarding civilian targeting in Colombia (e.g. El Espectador 2021; Agudelo 2024). Despite the peace accord, a wide range of armed groups continue fighting, including FARC dissidents who did not disarm after the agreement or have since rearmed. As such, non-state armed group maintain a presence throughout Colombia's territory (e.g. Indepaz 2022; Llorente, Preciado and Cajiao 2024). Civilian targeting also continues (e.g. Corredor Rodríguez 2023; Indepaz 2024). In other words, despite the accord, Colombia is not a post-conflict context; it is a country that is actively contending with past and present conflict, along with associated violence against civilians.

In Colombia today, the guerrillas have limited levels of public support. In the 10 years before the peace accord, no more than 7% of the Colombian public had confidence in the FARC (Dugand, García and Sánchez 2018). Public support for FARC dissidents may be even more limited due to the common perception that this diverse set of groups are more criminal than the pre-accord FARC (e.g. Posso et al. 2020; Cárdenas, Downing and Johnson 2022; Johnson et al. 2024). Colombians also remain deeply divided between state supporters with different attitudes toward the Armed Forces. For example, Former President Duque (2018-2022) was elected with a platform of modifying the peace agreement to ensure stricter punishment for FARC war criminals (El Tiempo 2018). Yet, President Petro (2022-2026) is a supporter of the peace accord and a harsh critic of human rights abuses committed by the state (El Espectador 2010; CNN 2022). In other words, while there is not an even level of support for the two sides of the conflict, Colombians who relatively prefer the military have varying levels of support for that side of the conflict.

Experimental Setup

This project uses an online survey experiment in Colombia with 1,587 respondents fielded on July 28th, 2021 by Dynata.[13] All respondents consented and indicated that they were Colombian citizens before continuing to the survey, during which they could skip any question. The design was approved by — University's IRB with protocol number 2021-0609. All hypotheses were pre-registered.[14] The experimental component was a vignette about an instance of violence against civilians which randomly varied whether the abuse was committed by the Colombian Armed Forces or FARC dissidents.

I operationalize individuals' preferences as how supportive they are of the military, drawing on three questions about security-related policy preferences with 1-5 answer scales.

[13]Respondents were not nationally representative (Table A1). For example, 1% of respondents had a primary education or less, compared to 40% of adult Colombians (OECD 2021). The benefits of demographically weighing online samples in Latin America are limited (Castorena et al. 2023). However, online convenience samples provide reliable estimates of experimental treatment effects (Coppock 2019; Mullinix et al. 2015).

[14]The pre-analysis plan is available at https://osf.io/myktb. Deviations are discussed in Appendix G.

First, "to what degree do you have confidence in the Armed Forces?" Second, "what should happen to the budget of the Ministry of Defense?" Third, "how much do you agree with the following statement: the peace accord was necessary to end the conflict with the FARC-EP." The last question was reverse coded so that a 5 indicates a hawkish attitude toward the guerrillas i.e. a strong preference for the state as an armed actor in the conflict.[15] I then create an additive index, **Pro-Military**, which is rescaled to 0-1. Indices built from survey items are more stable and precise than individual questions (Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder 2008; Broockman, Kalla and Sekhon 2017). In robustness checks, I run the models with each of the three original questions on a 0-1 scale (Tables A12, A13, and A14). Questions about attitudes toward the Armed Forces were asked before treatment to ensure that the experiment did not affect responses.[16]

These three questions are precise enough to identify respondents' support for the state as an actor in the armed conflict. Alternatives, such as ideology, are insufficiently exact; ideology is one of several determinants of support for armed actors (e.g. Levy 2023), and people can subscribe to a left or right wing ideology for reasons besides their beliefs about the conflict.[17] Additionally, the questions which make up the index do not put respondents in physical danger. Colombia is a multi-party state, and politicians regularly express distinct perspectives on the Armed Forces (e.g. El Espectador 2019, 2021; CNN 2022). Colombians feel comfortable expressing disapproval of the Armed Forces; from 2004-2018, 33-43% of Colombians did not have confidence in the Armed Forces (Rivera, Plata Caviedes and Rodríguez Raga 2018).[18] Directly asking respondents about their support for guerrillas,

[15]Much of the opposition to the peace accord came from the hawkish far right of Colombian politics (e.g. BBC 2016; Zuleta and Álvarez 2018).

[16]There is no pro- or anti-military content in these questions to prime respondents before the experiment. The first question which makes up the index comes from LAPOP. I did not use an endorsement or list experiment because it would not recover individual-level measures of attitudes, only predicted attitudes (e.g. Blair, Imai and Lyall 2014; Imai, Park and Greene 2015; Bullock, Imai and Shapiro 2017).

[17]Table A7 indicates that **Pro-Military** attitudes are correlated with ideology, victimization by both the government and guerrillas, and age. Two of the three interactions which are significant in the main results remain significant when **Pro-Military** is replaced with **Ideology** (Table A15).

[18]Matanock and García-Sánchez (2018) have found that Colombians inflate their confidence in the military; they used a binary direct question and a list experiment, whereas I use two questions with continuous answers. The average of **Pro-Military** is .4, suggesting that the continuous scales may have allowed people to express

in contrast, could place them in danger. The country is still beset by violence, and civilian supporters of the FARC's former political party were once violently targeted for voting for the group (Steele 2017). Additionally, social leaders perceived as leftists are frequently assassinated (e.g. Albarracín et al. 2022).

Respondents next read a vignette simulating the first paragraph of a newspaper article. The randomized treatment is whether the act of violence against civilians was allegedly committed by the Colombian Armed Forces or FARC dissidents. I did not include a control condition which did not name the perpetrator because, in the context of an ongoing conflict, respondents would likely infer that the perpetrator was on the other side of the conflict. In other words, inferences would be correlated with the key independent variable.

> Imagine a hypothetical article in the newspaper *El Tiempo*. After you read the first paragraph of the hypothetical article below, please answer several questions about the violence described in the article. Even if you are unsure of your answer, please do your best to respond.
>
> "Four civilians, who were not fighting and were not a part of either a non-state armed group or the Colombian Armed Forces, were killed in Antioquia yesterday morning. According to initial reports, the victims were two men and two women; all were shot at close range. The local mayor alleges that the perpetrators were *(leftist dissidents of the FARC / members of the Colombian Armed Forces)*."

There are several design decisions to note. First, the text references a massacre. A variety of armed actors have engaged in such a tactic, making it plausible that either FARC dissidents or the Armed Forces were responsible (e.g. Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2013).[19] Second, the vignette is set in the *El Tiempo* newspaper; it is the largest newspaper in the country and is relatively centrist.[20] Third, Antioquia is the site of the violence because it is plausible that a range of victims and perpetrators could be involved in the violence there and that the mayor could have a range of political affiliations.[21] Fourth, the vignette mentions

less-than-complete support for the Armed Forces.

[19]The most massacres were committed by paramilitaries. In order to limit social desirability bias, the vignette does not use the term "massacre."

[20]In 2022, 25% of Colombians read this newspaper offline each week and 34% read it online. It was the most common written offline news source and the most common online news source (Newman et al. 2022).

[21]A range of massacres have occurred in Antioquia recently (Indepaz 2024). It is where the modern

four deaths because that is the average number of victims of massacres in both 2020 and 2021 through April 27 (Indepaz 2024). Fifth, the vignette says little about the victims in order not to suggest a specific perpetrator. For example, if the victims were campesinos, respondents may infer that the violence occurred in a rural area in which non-state groups were fighting over territory. Last, the vignette is hypothetical to avoid deception; describing a scenario as hypothetical does not change survey results (Brutger et al. 2022). Despite its hypotheticality, the vignette is realistic.[22]

Respondents then answered questions about the vignette.[23] **Wrongfulness** asks, on a scale from 1 ("strong disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), how much the respondent agrees that the violence was morally wrong. **Punishment** asks what degree of punishment is appropriate; responses range from pardon to life imprisonment. Four of these punishments are based off possible punishments established in the peace accord (Roccatello and Rojas 2020; JEP 2021). However, pardon and life imprisonment are more lenient and more harsh, respectively, than those in the accord.[24] **Necessity** asks, on a scale from 1 ("very unlikely") to 5 ("very likely"), how likely it is that the violence was necessary to achieve military gains. **Responsibility** asks how likely it is that the leadership of the organization was responsible for the violence, on the same scale.[25] **Harmfulness** asks respondents to describe the number of victims on a 5-point scale ranging from "very small" to "very large." Full question wording can be found in Appendix A.

Regressions are OLS. **Armed Forces Perpetrator** takes a value of 0 if FARC dissidents are the perpetrator and a value of 1 if the Colombian Armed Forces are. Given that this is a randomized experiment and there are not significant demographic differences across

paramilitary phenomenon began (e.g. Gutierrez Sanín 2019), but the FARC's former political party also found a great deal of support in the department (La Comisión de la Verdad 2022). There are over 120 mayors in Antioquia (Datos Abiertos, Gobierno de Colombia 2022).

[22]For two examples of a mayors making allegations about the perpetrators of recent massacres in their towns, see WRadio (2021) and Agudelo (2021).

[23]These questions were presented in a random order.

[24]Colombia does not allow the death penalty. Note that there are 6 response options to this question, but the variable has been rescaled to range from 1-5 in order to match the scale of all other dependent variables.

[25]I assume that, if leadership of the organization is not responsible, then individual fighters are instead responsible for the violence.

individuals in the treatment groups (Table A2), no control variables are used in the main analyses. All figures show 95% confidence intervals.

Results

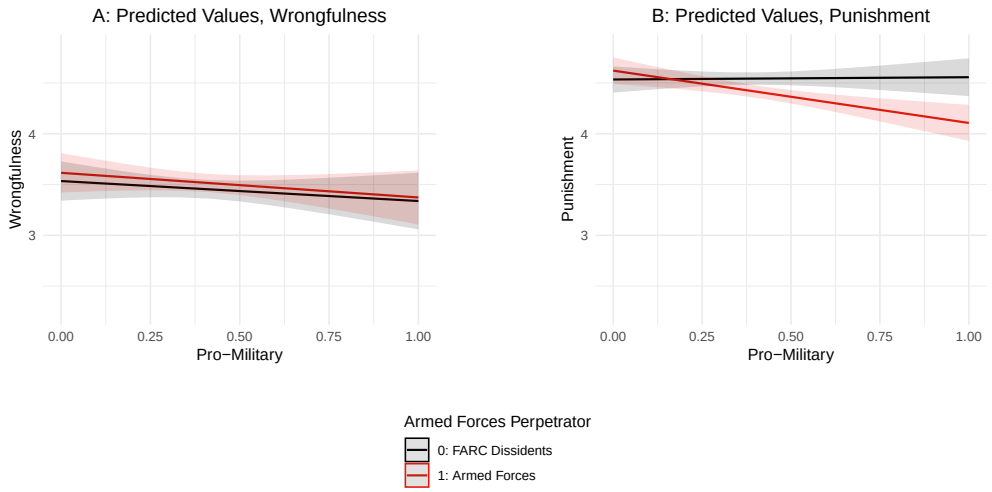
The results in Table A8 suggest that people justify less harsh punishment for their preferred side by characterizing that side's violence as less harmful and less likely to be the responsibility of armed group leadership. Figure 3 focuses on how judgements of the actor shape moral judgements and Figure 4 examines how judgements of the actor shape judgements of the action. Given the difficulty of discerning whether judgements of actions shape moral judgements or moral judgements shape judgements of actions, and given that survey questions about the violence, its moral wrongfulness, and the appropriate punishment for it are all asked post-treatment, I do not directly examine here the relationships between judgements of the action and moral judgements.[26]

Figure 3 focuses on whether judgements of the actor affect moral judgements (models 1 and 2, Table A8). It visualizes the interaction effect of **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Pro-Military** in regressions on **Wrongfulness** and **Punishment**. Panel A shows that this interaction is not significant in the regression on **Wrongfulness**; people do not seem to characterize violence by their side as less morally wrong than violence committed by the other side, regardless of their attitudes toward the military. This does not support the *Relative Preference & Wrongfulness Hypothesis*. Panel B shows the negative and statistically significant interaction effect of the same two variables on **Punishment**.[27] When someone has the strongest **Pro-Military** attitude, they seek punishment for state perpetrators which is .54 points less severe than the punishment they seek for guerrillas. At lower levels of

[26]More precisely, I do not examine, on the one hand, **Necessity**, **Harmfulness**, or **Responsibility** and, on the other hand, **Wrongfulness** or **Punishment**. I explore these correlations in Appendix E, which indicates that people who judge violence to be less harmful or less likely to be organized by group leadership perceive it as less morally wrong and less worthy of harsh punishment. **Necessity** is correlated with **Wrongfulness** but not **Punishment**.

[27]Respondents have a range of **Pro-Military** values (Figure A1), ensuring that I am not interpreting interactions at impossible or extremely rare values. See Figure A2 and Table A19 for more detailed analyses of the quality of statistically significant interactions.

Pro-Military support, the difference between evaluations of punishment for the two sides is smaller. These results support the *Relative Preference & Punishment Hypothesis*: the stronger individuals' preferences are, the less likely they are to believe that perpetrators should be harshly punished when violence is committed by their side in comparison to when it is perpetrated by the other side.[28]



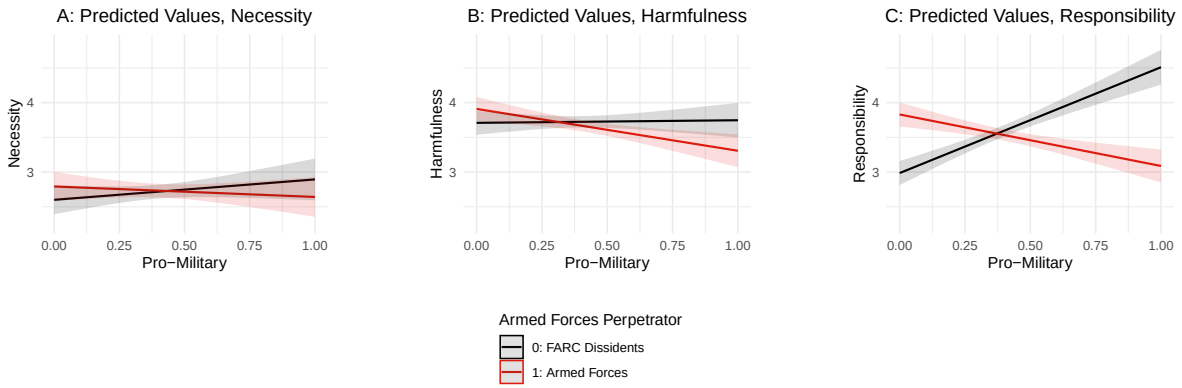
Note: Numeric results are in models 1 and 2 of A8. Panel A visualizes the non-significant interaction effect of **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Pro-Military** on **Wrongfulness**. This finding doesn't support the *Relative Preference & Wrongfulness Hypothesis*, which states that, the stronger individuals' preferences are, the less likely they are to think their side's violence is morally wrong compared to the other side's violence. Panel B shows the negative interaction effect of **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Pro-Military** on **Punishment**. This supports the *Relative Preference & Punishment Hypothesis*: the stronger individuals' preferences are, the less likely they are to believe that perpetrators should be harshly punished when the violence is committed by their preferred side compared to when it is committed by the other side.

Figure 3: The Effect of Judgement of the Actor on Moral Judgement

Figure 4 considers whether judgement of the actor shapes judgement of the action. It focuses on whether the interaction between **Pro-Military** and **Armed Forces Perpetrator** affects perceptions of military **Necessity**, the **Harmfulness** of the abuse, and who bears **Responsibility** for it (models 3-5 in Table A8). The interaction is not statistically significant in the regression on **Necessity** (Panel A) but is negative and statistically significant in the regressions on **Harmfulness** (Panel B) and **Responsibility** (Panel C). When individuals strongly support the military, they characterize military violence as .64 points less harmful than guerrilla violence and 2.27 points less likely to be the responsibility of group leadership

[28]The main models treat **Punishment** as a continuous variable. However, the results are robust to using an ordered logit model, which assumes that **Punishment** and the other dependent variables have ordinal properties (Table A18).

(on a 5-point scale). At low levels of support for the state, the difference in the perceived harmfulness of state and guerrilla violence is smaller, and respondents characterize military violence as *more* likely to be the responsibility of armed group leaders than guerrilla violence is to be the responsibility of non-state group leaders. These findings do not support for *Relative Preference & Necessity Hypothesis* but do support the *Relative Preference & Harmfulness Hypothesis* as well as the *Relative Preference & Responsibility Hypothesis*: respondents with strong preferences characterize their side's violence as less harmful and less likely to be the responsibility of group leadership, but not more militarily necessary, compared to violence committed by the other side. In other words, they justify their side's violence.



Note: Numeric results are in models 3-5, A8. Panel A shows that the interaction effect of **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Pro-Military** on **Necessity** is not significant. This does not support the *Relative Preference & Necessity Hypothesis*, which states that, the stronger individuals' preferences are, the more likely they are to believe that violence committed by their preferred side is militarily necessary compared to when it is committed by the other side. Panels B and C visualize the negative interaction effect of these same variables on both **Harmfulness** and **Responsibility**. These results support *Relative Preference & Harmfulness Hypothesis* as well as the *Relative Prefernece & Responsibility Hypothesis*: the stronger individuals' preferences are, the less likely they are to believe that the violence committed by their preferred side causes extensive harm and is the responsibility of armed group leadership compared to when the violence is committed by the other side.

Figure 4: Effects of Judgement of the Actor on Judgements of the Action

The findings from the main analyses are supported in a moderated mediation analysis as detailed in Tingley et al. (2014) (Section D.1).[29] The interactions between **Pro-Military** and the treatment remain significant in the regressions on **Punishment** and **Responsibility**,

[29]This is not the main analysis for several reasons. First, it is not clear whether people reach judgements of the action before or after moral judgements. Second, it is unlikely that the data meets the second part of the sequential ignorability assumption, which requires that, conditional on pretreatment covariates, the mediators are as if randomized (Imai, Keele and Tingley 2010). See Table A9. Third, analyses in which mediators are not randomized are subject to bias, especially when multiple mediators are correlated (Bullock and Ha 2019). Fourth, respondents may not believe attempts to randomize **Necessity, Harmfulness** or **Responsibility** (Acharya, Blackwell and Sen 2018; Bullock and Ha 2019).

though not in the regression on **Harmfulness**, when including controls (Table A9) as well as when controlling for the interaction between the treatment and a range of other control variables (Table A10). Many of the results are robust to removing people who failed the attention check (Table A11), using each of the three variables which make up the **Pro-Military** index (Tables A12, A13, and A14),[30] excluding residents of the department where the vignette is set (Table A17), and treating the dependent variables as ordinal rather than continuous (Table A18). All results which are significant in Table A8 remain significant with a Bonferroni correction to adjust for multiple comparisons across 5 dependent variables, except the interaction in Model 4. The main models have assumed that all of the interactions between the treatment and **Pro-Military** are linear, but the three significant interactions are also robust to using an alternative interaction model as suggested by Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2019) (see right panels of Figure A2). Indeed, diagnostic tests detailed in Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2019) indicate that linear interaction models are a mostly appropriate approach (see left panels of Figure A2 and Table A19).[31] Lastly, there is little evidence that treatment affects beliefs about the state (Table A16).

Centrists vs. FARC Supporters

From the results detailed above, it seems to be primarily military supporters who have double standards. There are two possible explanations for this. First, there is mixed evidence than conservatives have a greater need for certainty and engage in more motivated reasoning (e.g. Jost 2017; Guay and Johnston 2022). Second, this asymmetry may be the result of the construction of the **Pro-Military** variable, which cannot differentiate between guerrilla supporters and individuals who do not support either side in the conflict (i.e., centrists).

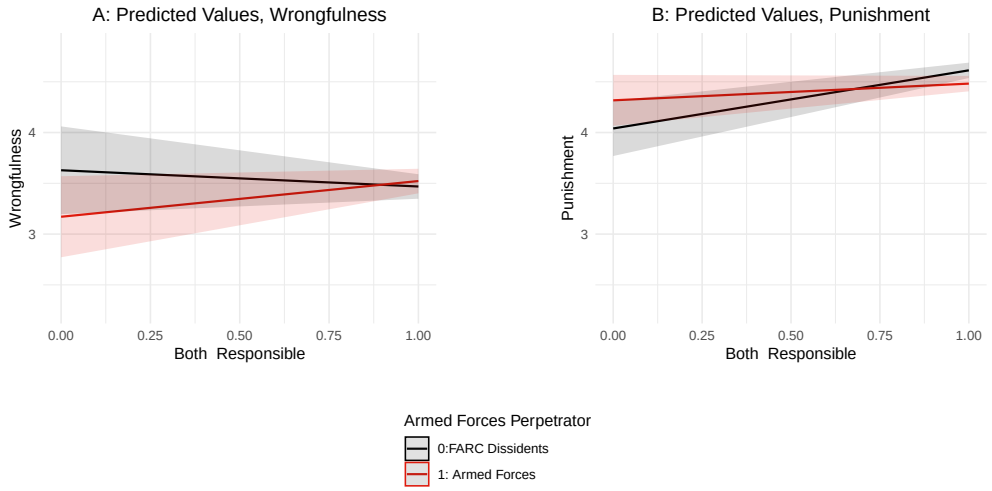
In an attempt to disentangle these groups, I draw on a survey question that asks which

[30] Only one of the three statistically significant interactions remains significant when using the measure of support for the 2016 peace accord. Indeed, Table A4 suggests that the correlation between **Accord Not Necessary** and the other two variables which make up the index is quite weak. The correlation between **Confidence Military** and **Military Budget Increase** is .42.

[31] These diagnostics provide mixed evidence that, for the interaction in the regression on **Harmfulness**, the linear interaction effect assumption may not be correct.

groups were principally responsible for the violence that Colombia has experienced.[32] I first subset the data to exclude Armed Forces supporters: those who think that the guerrillas but not the state were responsible. Then, **Both Responsible** is 1 if respondents identify both the state *and* the guerrillas as principally responsible for the violence or indicate that "all" groups were responsible. It is 0 if respondents identify the state but not guerrillas as responsible. Respondents with a value of 1 are centrists, and others are guerrilla supporters.

I then rerun some analyses on this subset of respondents, using **Both Responsible** instead of **Pro-Military** (Table A21). Panel B of Figure 5 demonstrates that guerrilla supporters (**Both Responsible** = 0) seek less harsh punishment for FARC dissidents than for the Armed Forces. This analysis provides evidence that the preferences of guerrilla supporters affect their moral judgement, just as the preferences of military supporters do. However, given that this analysis is exploratory and the question used to create the **Both Responsible** variable was asked after the experiment, introducing posttreatment bias, these results are suggestive and preliminary.



Note: This analysis uses a subset of the data which excludes military supporters. Numeric results can be found in Table A21. Panel B demonstrates that the interaction between **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Both Responsible** is not significant in the regression on **Wrongfulness**. Panel C visualizes the negative interaction effect of **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Both Responsible** on **Punishment**. This result suggests that guerrilla supporters' (**Both Responsible**=0) preferences shape their moral judgement.

Figure 5: Subset, Excluding Military Supporters

[32]Response options are guerrillas, paramilitaries, BACRIM, the military, the police, others, and/or all.

Social Desirability and Null Results

I took several steps to limit social desirability bias in the experiment. Questions integrated uncertainty to give respondents cover to express their opinions; they included phrases such as "how likely" and, "even if you are unsure of your answer." Additionally, the vignette did not include graphic descriptions of violence. Nonetheless, social desirability bias could have prompted people to skip some or all experimental questions or to falsify their answers.

It is unlikely that respondents avoided specific experimental questions; the correlations between NAs is high (See Table A3). Tables A5 and A6 do suggest that demographics, such as income, matter for who does not respond. However, respondents were no more likely to skip questions if they had weaker **Pro-Military** attitudes, were in either treatment group, or were victims of the conflict. Because victims could be more reluctant to answer questions about violence, and because people could fear expressing negative opinions about armed actors with the capacity to retaliate against them, these nulls indicate that missingness is unlikely the result of social desirability bias.

In terms of preference falsification, many respondents expressed distasteful opinions. The average respondent supported 15 years in prison for perpetrators and neither agreed nor disagreed that the violence was morally wrong. 2% advocated for pardon, whereas 56% supported lifetime imprisonment. 8% "strongly disagreed" that the violence was morally wrong, and 26% "strongly agreed" that it was. Because respondents expressed more socially desirable responses to **Punishment** than to **Wrongfulness**, it is unlikely that social desirability bias in **Wrongfulness** caused the null results regarding that variable.

Conclusion

I have argued that moral judgements build on judgements of the actor as well as judgements of the action. When faced with their preferred side engaging in a wrongful action such as civilian targeting, people experience inconsistency between their judgements of the action and of the actor. This inconsistency introduces cognitive dissonance, which they reduce by

justifying the violence using three forms of moral disengagement. Depending on whether the perpetrator is on their preferred side and how strongly they prefer that side, people differentially evaluate the cause of the violence, i.e., whether it is militarily necessary; the consequences of the violence, i.e., how many people were harmed; and responsibility for the violence, i.e., whether armed group leadership bears responsibility. An online survey in Colombia which presented respondents with an instance of civilian targeting committed either by state Armed Forces or leftist guerrillas indicates that people justify lesser punishment for their preferred perpetrators by characterizing that side's violence as less harmful and less likely to be the responsibility of armed group leadership.

These results suggest that people rely on some, but not all, forms of moral disengagement in order to justify the violence committed by their preferred side. If there were not a strong norm against such violence, then respondents would not feel a need to find justifications for the violence. In other words, the results in Figure 4 would be all nulls. Conversely, the null results regarding **Necessity** in the same figure indicate that respondents are not simply latching onto any excuse for the violence which is provided to them in survey questions.

It is important to briefly consider why people's relative preferences don't shape their views on **Wrongfulness** or **Necessity** in the context of Colombia. It may be the case that cognitive dissonance matters more for evaluations of punishment rather than for notions of moral wrongfulness because, in the context of ongoing transitional justice, questions about punishment have larger political implications. Indeed, there is some evidence that cognitive dissonance is heightened amidst aversive or unwanted consequences (e.g. Cooper and Carlsmith 2015). The null for **Necessity** may be the result of the protracted nature of the Colombian conflict; people may not think that any given attack makes a difference in the war. Indeed, other factors also don't seem to impact beliefs about the military necessity of the violence (Table A9). If these null results are due to Colombia-specific features, then future research is necessary to determine whether people rely on alternative justifications for civilian targeting committed by their preferred armed actors in other contexts. Future work

should also examine whether people rely on distinct justifications at various points during and after conflict; for example, it is possible that the results would have looked different in Colombia prior to the 2016 peace accord or at the very beginning of the conflict between leftists and the Colombian government in the 1960s.

Turning toward policy implications, this project implies that moral disengagement can be an impediment to societal reconciliation, encouraging people to support overly lenient punishment for their side but excessively harsh punishment for the other side. As such, a key question is how to ameliorate the influence of moral disengagement on judgements of wartime violence. Prior work indicates that explaining moral disengagement and teaching people how to recognize it reduces its use (McAlister 2001; Bustamante and Chaux 2014), as do reminders of harm and of one's morality (Aquino et al. 2007; Kish-Gephart et al. 2014). In post-conflict contexts, emerging research suggests that it is indeed possible to change public attitudes toward war crimes (Jo 2022; Balcells, Palanza and Voytas 2022).

Some kinds of messaging may be more effective at promoting reconciliatory attitudes. For example, people respond more negatively to torture when it is portrayed as prolonged (harmful) than when it is portrayed as ineffective (not militarily necessary) (Hassner 2023). My research suggests that, if transitional justice, civil society, or legal institutions can prove that leaders were responsible for the violence despite armed group efforts to deny it, regular people may find it more difficult to use moral disengagement to justify their side's abuses. Evidence in favor of this conclusion could include clear verbal or written orders, statements in which leaders authorize or promote violence, or proof that leadership knew about the violence but did not take action to stop it. These efforts may be more useful at swaying public opinion than, for example, the systematic documentation of casualties. Further research should more directly examine how information or propaganda about civilian targeting from armed groups, transitional justice institutions, and other political actors affects people's judgements about war crimes.

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Bias in the Evaluation of Violence Against Civilians: Cognitive Dissonance and Moral Disengagement in Colombia

Supplementary Appendices

Contents

A Full Survey Text

A.1 English

- In what year were you born?
- What is your gender?
    1. Male
    2. Female
    3. Other gender
    99. Prefer not to answer
- In what municipality were you born (e.g. Cali)?
- In what municipality do you live (e.g. Medellín)
- What is the highest level of education you have finished?
    0. None
    1. Primary school
    2. Secondary school
    3. Associate degree
    4. University
- Can you tell me in which of these ranges is your monthly household income, including remittances from abroad and the income of all adults and children who work?
    0. No income
    1. Less than 205.000
    2. Between 205.001 and 325.000
    3. Between 325.001 and 440.000
    4. Between 440.001 and 565.000
    5. Between 565.001 and 650.000
    6. Between 650.001 and 710.000
    7. Between 710.001 and 750.000
    8. Between 750.001 and 810.000
    9. Between 810.001 and 915.000
    10. Between 915.001 and 1.000.000
    11. Between 1.000.001and 1.250.000
    12. Between 1.250.001 and 1.365.000
    13. Between 1.365.001 and 1.600.000
    14. Between 1.600.001 and 2.000.000
    15. Between 2.000.001 and 3.150.000
    16. More than 3.150.000
    98. Inapplicable (no work or retired)
- What best describes the area in which you live?
    1. Rural area
    2. Small city
    3. Mid-sized city
    4. Large city
    5. National Capital (metropolitan area)

- On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "strongly disagree" and 5 indicates "strongly agree," how much do you agree with the following statement: the peace accord was necessary to end the conflict with the FARC-EP?

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree

- On this page we have a scale that goes from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and signifies "none" and 5 is the highest and signifies "a lot." To what degree do you have confidence in the Armed Forces?

1. None	2.	3.	4.	5. A lot

- What should happen to the budget of the Ministry of Defense?

  1. It should be decreased a lot
  2. It should be decreased a little
  3. It should stay the same
  4. It should be increased a little
  5. It should be increased a lot

  Imagine a hypothetical article in the newspaper El Tiempo. Please read the first paragraph of the hypothetical article below, and then please answer several questions about the violence described in the article. Even if you are unsure of your answer, please do your best to respond.

  "Four civilians, who were not fighting and were not a part of either a non-state armed group or the Colombian Armed Forces, were killed in Antioquia yesterday morning. According to initial reports, the victims were two men and two women; all were shot at close range. The local mayor alleges that the perpetrators were *(leftist dissidents of the FARC / members of the Colombian Armed Forces).*

- On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "strongly disagree" and 5 indicates "strongly agree," how much do you agree with the following statement: the violence described in the article above was morally wrong?

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree

- What degree of punishment should the perpetrators of the violence described in the above article receive?
    1. No punishment/pardon
    2. 2 years of house arrest
    3. 5 years of house arrest
    4. 5 years of imprisonment
    5. 15 years of imprisonment
    6. Life imprisonment
- On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "very unlikely" and 5 indicates "very likely," how likely is it that the violence described in the article above was necessary to achieve military gains? Even if you are unsure of your answer, please do your best to respond.

1. Very unlikely	2. Unlikely	3. Neither likely nor unlikely	4. Likely	5. Very likely

- Do you think that the number of victims of the violence described in the above article is very small, small, neither small nor large, large, or very large?
    1. Very small
    2. Small
    3. Neither small nor large
    4. Large
    5. Very large
- On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "very unlikely" and 5 indicates "very likely," how likely is it that the leadership of the organization that the perpetrators belonged to were responsible for the violence described in the article above? Even if you are unsure of your answer, please do your best to respond.

1. Very unlikely	2. Unlikely	3. Neither likely nor unlikely	4. Likely	5. Very likely

- On this page we have a scale that goes from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and signifies "none" and 5 is the highest and signifies "a lot." To what degree do you have confidence in the National Government?

1. None	2.	3.	4.	5. A lot

- On this page we have a scale from 1 to 10 that goes from left to right, in which 1 signifies left and 10 signifies right. Today when we talk about political tendency, many people talk about those that sympathize more with the left or the right. According to the meaning that the terms "left" and "right" have for you when you think about your political point of view, where would you place yourself on this scale?

1 Left	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Right

- Have you lost a family member or close relative as a consequence of the armed conflict, or do you have a relative who was disappeared in the conflict?

  0. No
  1. Yes
  99. Prefer not to answer

  if yes, proceed to following question; if not, skip

- Which type of actor or actors were responsible? Indicate all that apply.

  1. Guerrillas
  2. Paramilitaries
  3. BACRIM (criminal bands)
  4. The army
  5. The police
  6. Other
  98. Don't know
  99. Prefer not to answer

- Would you say that the services the municipality is giving to the people are?

1. Very bad (awful)	2. Bad	3. Neither good nor bad (regular)	4. (Good)	5. Very good

- Speaking of the place or neighborhood where you live and thinking about the possibility of being a victim of assault or robbery, do you feel very insecure, somewhat insecure, somewhat secure, or very secure?
- Did you vote in the second round of presidential elections in June of 2018?

  0. No
  1. Yes
  99. Prefer not to Answer

  if yes, proceed to following question; if not, skip

1. Very insecure	2. Somewhat insecure	3. Somewhat secure	4. Very secure

- Who did you vote for?
  1. Iván Duque
  2. Gustavo Petro
  99. Prefer not to answer
- In your opinion, which is the principal actor responsible for the violence you've lived through in Colombia?
  1. Guerrillas
  2. Paramilitaries
  3. BACRIM (criminal bands)
  4. The army
  5. The police
  6. Other
  7. All
  99. Prefer not to answer
- What best describes the area in which you live?
  5. National Capital (metropolitan area)
  4. Large city
  3. Mid-sized city
  2. Small city
  1. Rural area
- Imagine that *(no new information emerged about the false positives / the JEP found that former President Uribe ordered the false positives, but he continued to deny involvement / the JEP found that former President Uribe ordered the false positives, and he apologized for his involvement).* What degree of punishment do you think former President Uribe should receive for the false positives?
  1. No punishment/pardon
  2. 2 years of house arrest
  3. 5 years of house arrest
  4. 5 years of imprisonment
  5. 15 years of imprisonment
  6. Life imprisonment

A.2 Spanish

- ¿En qué año nació?
- ¿Usted se considera?

1. Hombre
2. Mujer
3. Otro género
99. Me niego a contestar

- ¿En qué municipio nació usted (p. ej Cali)?
- ¿En qué municipio vive usted (p. ej Medellín)?
- ¿Cuál es el nivel educativo más alto alcanzado por usted?

0. Ninguno
1. Primario
2. Secundario o bachillerato
3. Técnico / Tecnólogo
4. Universitario

- ¿En cuál de los siguientes rangos se encuentran los ingresos familiares mensuales de este hogar, incluyendo las remesas del exterior y el ingreso de todos los adultos e hijos que trabajan?

0. Ningún ingreso
1. Menos que 205.000
2. Entre 205.001 y 325.000
3. Entre 325.001 y 440.000
4. Entre 440.001 y 565.000
5. Entre 565.001 y 650.000
6. Entre 650.001 y 710.000
7. Entre 710.001 y 750.000
8. Entre 750.001 y 810.000
9. Entre 810.001 y 915.000
10. Entre 915.001 y 1.000.000
11. Entre 1.000.001 y 1.250.000
12. Entre 1.250.001 y 1.365.000
13. Entre 1.365.001 y 1.600.000
14. Entre 1.600.001 y 2.000.000
15. Entre 2.000.001 y 3.150.000
16. Más que 3.150.000
98. Inaplicable (no trabaja ni está jubilado)

- ¿Cuál categoría describe mejor el área en dónde usted vive?

1. Área rural
2. Ciudad pequeño
3. Ciudad mediana
4. Ciudad grande
5. Capital Nacional (área metropolitana)

- ¿En una escala del 1 a 5, donde 1 es "muy en desacuerdo" y 5 es "muy de acuerdo," ¿hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con la siguiente frase: El acuerdo de paz era necesario para finalizar el conflicto con las FARC-EP?

1. Muy en desacuerdo	2. En desacuerdo	3. Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	4. De acuerdo	5. Muy de acuerdo

- En esta página hay una escalera con escalones numerados del 1 a 5, en la cual 1 es el escalón más bajo y significa "nada" y el 5 es el escalón más alto y significa "mucho."¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en las Fuerzas Armadas?

1. Nada	2.	3.	4.	5. Mucho

- ¿Qué debe pasar con el presupuesto del Ministerio de Defensa?

  1. Debe ser reducido mucho
  2. Debe ser reducido un poco
  3. Debe quedar igual
  4. Debe ser aumentado un poco
  5. Debe ser aumentado mucho

  Imagine un artículo hipotético en el periódico El Tiempo. Por favor lea el primer párrafo de este artículo hipotético ubicado a continuación, y luego por favor conteste las preguntas sobre la violencia descrita en el artículo. Incluso si no está seguro de su respuesta, por favor haga su mejor esfuerzo por responder.

  "Cuatro civiles, que no estaban luchando y que no eran miembros de ningún grupo armado ni de las Fuerzas Militares de Colombia, fueron asesinados en Antioquia ayer por la mañana. Según los primeros datos, las víctimas fueron dos hombres y dos mujeres; a todos les dispararon a corta distancia. El alcalde del municipio alega que los perpetradores fueron *(izquierdistas disidentes de las FARC / miembros de las Fuerzas Militares de Colombia)*."

- ¿En una escala del 1 a 5, donde 1 es "muy en desacuerdo" y 5 es "muy de acuerdo," ¿hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con la siguiente frase: la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior fue moralmente incorrecta?

1. Muy en desacuerdo	2. En desacuerdo	3. Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	4. De acuerdo	5. Muy de acuerdo

- ¿Qué tipo de sanción merecen los perpetradores de la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior?
    1. Ningún castigo/perdón
    2. 2 años de detención domiciliaria
    3. 5 años de detención domiciliaria
    4. 5 años en el carcél
    5. 15 años en el carcél
    6. Cadena perpetua
- En una escala del 1 a 5, donde 1 es "nada probable" y 5 es "muy probable," ¿qué tan probable es que la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior fuera necesaria para lograr objetivos militares? Incluso si no está seguro de su respuesta, por favor haga su mejor esfuerzo por responder.

1. Nada probable	2. No muy probable	3. Ni probable ni no probable	4. Probable	5. Muy probable

- ¿Cree usted que el número de víctimas de la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior es muy bajo, bajo, ni bajo ni alto, alto, o muy alto?
    1. Muy bajo
    2. Bajo
    3. Ni bajo ni alto
    4. Alto
    5. Muy alto
- En una escala del 1 a 5, donde 1 es "nada probable" y 5 es "muy probable," ¿qué tan probable es que los líderes de la organización a la que los perpetradores pertenecen fueran responsables de la violencia descrita en el artículo anterior? Incluso si no está seguro de su respuesta, por favor haga su mejor esfuerzo por responder.

1. Nada probable	2. No muy probable	3. Ni probable ni no probable	4. Probable	5. Muy probable

- En esta página hay una escalera con escalones numerados del 1 a 5, en la cual 1 es el escalón más bajo y significa "nada" y el 5 es el escalón más alto y significa "mucho." ¿Hasta qué punto tiene confianza usted en el Gobierno Nacional?
- En esta página tenemos una escala del 1 a 10 que va de izquierda a derecha, en la que el 1 significa izquierda y el 10 significa derecha. Hoy en día cuando se habla de tendencias políticas, mucha gente habla de aquellos que simpatizan más con la izquierda o con la derecha. Según el sentido que tengan para usted los términos "izquierda" y "derecha"

1. Nada	2.	3.	4.	5. Mucho

cuando piensa sobre su punto de vista político, ¿dónde se encontraría usted en esta escala?

1 Izquierda	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Derecha

- ¿Usted ha perdido algún miembro de su familia o pariente cercano a consecuencia del conflicto armado, o tiene un familiar desaparecido por el conflicto?

  0. No
  1. Sí
  99. Me niego a contestar

  if yes, proceed to following question; if not, skip
- ¿Qué tipo de actor o actores fueron responsables? Por favor marque todos los que apliquen.

  1. La guerrilla
  2. Los paramilitares
  3. BACRIM (Bandas criminales)
  4. El ejército
  5. La policía
  6. Otro
  98. No sé
  99. Me niego a contestar
- ¿Diría usted que los servicios que la municipalidad está dando a la gente son:

1. Muy malos (pésimos)	2. Malos	3. Ni buenos ni malos (regulares)	4. Buenos	5. Muy buenos

- Hablando del lugar o el barrio donde usted vive y pensando en la posibilidad de ser víctima de un asalto o robo, ¿usted se siente muy inseguro(a), algo inseguro(a), algo seguro(a) o muy seguro(a)?
- ¿Votó usted en la segunda ronda de las elecciones presidenciales en mayo del 2018?

  0. No
  1. Sí

1. Muy inseguro(a)	2. Algo inseguro(a)	3. Algo seguro(a)	4. Muy seguro(a)

99. Me niego a contestar

if yes, proceed to following question; if not, skip

- ¿Por quién votó usted?
  1. Iván Duque
  2. Gustavo Petro
  99. Me niego a contestar
- En su opinión, ¿cuál o cuales son los principales responsables de la violencia que se ha vivido en Colombia?
  1. La guerrilla
  2. Los paramilitares
  3. BACRIM (Bandas criminales)
  4. El ejército
  5. La policía
  6. Otro
  7. Todos
  99. Me niego a contestar
- ¿Cuál categoría describe mejor el área en dónde vive usted?
  5. Capital Nacional (área metropolitana)
  4. Ciudad grande
  3. Ciudad mediana
  2. Ciudad pequeña
  1. Área rural
- Suponga que *(no hay información nueva sobre los falsos positivos / la JEP se entera de que el expresidente Uribe ordenó los falsos positivos, pero él continúa negándose a aceptarlo / la JEP se entera de que el expresidente Uribe ordenó los falsos positivos, y él se disculpa por su involucramiento).* ¿Qué tipo de sanción merece el expresidente Uribe por los falsos positivos?
  1. Ningún castigo/perdón
  2. 2 años de detención domiciliaria
  3. 5 años de detención domiciliaria
  4. 5 años en el carcél
  5. 15 años en el carcél
  6. Cadena perpetua

B Data

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Year Born	1,504	1988	11.28	1945	2011
Gender	1,538	1.50	0.50	1	2
Education	1,553	3.20	0.83	0	4
Income	1,497	10.66	4.94	0	16
Rural	1,552	2.46	1.28	1	5
Accord Not Necessary	1,549	0.40	0.32	0	1
Confidence Military	1,547	0.49	0.33	0	1
Military Budget Increase	1,554	0.31	0.30	0	1
Pro-Military	1,531	0.40	0.21	0	1
Wrongfulness	1,527	3.48	1.27	1	5
Punishment	1,527	4.48	0.85	1	5
Necessary	1,525	2.72	1.36	1	5
Harmfulness	1,528	3.69	1.14	1	5
Responsibility	1,524	3.55	1.15	1	5
Ideology	1,505	5.44	2.31	1	10
Victimized	1,437	0.32	0.46	0	1
Victimized Gov	1,587	0.05	0.23	0	1
Victimized Guerrilla	1,587	0.14	0.35	0	1

Table A2: Balance Table, Treatment

Variable	Treatment=0 Guerrilla Perp	Treatment =1 State Perp	Difference
Education	3.21	3.19	- .02
Gender	1.49	1.51	.02
Income	10.50	10.80	.30
Rural	2.48	2.45	-.03
Victimized Gov	.05	.06	.01
Victimized Guerrilla	.13	.15	.02

Note: $^{\circ}$p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table A3: Correlation between Missingness in Dependent Variables

	Wrongfulness NA	Punishment NA	Necessity NA	Harmfulness NA	Responsibility NA
Wrongfulness NA	1	0.97	0.95	0.96	0.94
Punishment NA	0.97	1	0.95	0.96	0.94
Necessary NA	0.95	0.95	1	0.96	0.94
Severity NA	0.96	0.96	0.96	1	0.95
Responsibility NA	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.95	1

Table A4: Correlations Between Index Components

	Accord Not Necessary	Confidence Military	Military Budget Increase
Accord Not Necessary	1	0.02	0.08
Confidence Military	0.02	1	0.42
Military Budget Increase	0.08	0.42	1

Table A5: Balance Table, Punishment Missingness

Variable	Not NA	NA	Difference
Education	2.87	3.21	.34°
Gender	1.63	1.50	-.13
Income	8.42	10.70	2.28*
Rural	2.73	2.46	-.27
Victimized	.50	.31	-.19
Pro-Military	.38	.40	.02
Armed Forces Perp.	.53	.51	-.02

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table A6: Balance Table, Necessity Missingness

Variable	Not NA	NA	Difference
Education	2.91	3.21	.30
Gender	1.55	1.50	-.05
Income	8.18	10.70	2.52*
Rural	2.82	2.46	-.36
Victimized	.67	.31	-.36
Pro-Military	.36	.40	.04
Armed Forces Perp.	.53	.51	-.02

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Figure A1: Distribution of **Pro-Military**

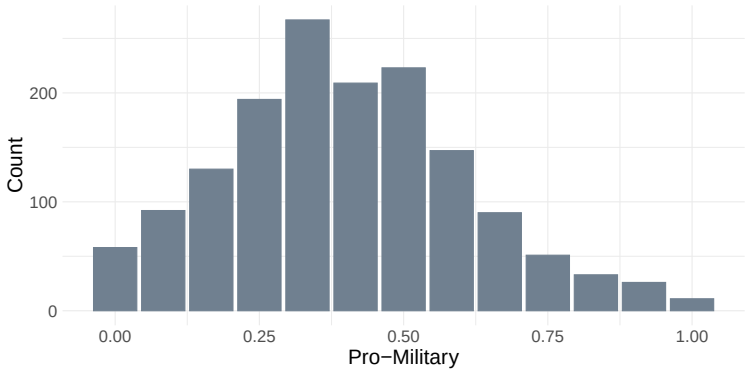


Table A7: Determinants of Pro-Military

	Pro-Military
Intercept	6.12***
	(0.99)
Gender	0.01
	(0.01)
Education	−0.01
	(0.01)
Age	−0.00***
	(0.00)
Income	0.00
	(0.00)
Rural	0.00
	(0.00)
Victimized Gov	−0.09***
	(0.02)
Victimized Guerrilla	0.06***
	(0.01)
Ideology	0.03***
	(0.00)
Security	0.01
	(0.01)
R^2	0.19
Adj. R^2	0.18
Num. obs.	1376

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{\circ}p < 0.1$

C Main Results

Table A8: Main Results

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
Intercept	3.53***	4.53***	2.60***	3.71***	2.99***
	(0.10)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.08	0.09	0.19	0.20	0.84***
	(0.14)	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Pro-Military	−0.20	0.02	0.29	0.04	1.52***
	(0.22)	(0.15)	(0.24)	(0.20)	(0.20)
Pro-Military x Armed Forces Perp.	−0.05	−0.54**	−0.44	−0.64*	−2.27***
	(0.31)	(0.21)	(0.33)	(0.28)	(0.28)
R^2	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.05
Adj. R^2	−0.00	0.01	−0.00	0.01	0.05
Num. obs.	1507	1507	1506	1509	1505

Note: $^{\circ}$p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

D Robustness Tests

D.1 Mediation Analysis

Use of the R package 'Mediation' indicates that **Necessity**, **Harmfulness**, and **Responsibility** are not statistically significant mediators of the relationship between the treatment, **Armed Forces Perpetrator**, and moral **Wrongfulness**. Similarly, none of the three variables mediates the relationship between **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and **Punishment** in a statistically significant fashion. However, the theory suggests that these three variables have different effects on the dependent variables depending on the value of **Pro-Military**. As such, these null results make sense.

I thus conducted a moderated mediation analysis to examine whether the average causal mediation effect (ACME) of these three variables on **Wrongfulness** varies between two illustrative cases: **Pro-Military** values of .25 and one of .75. The ACME of **Necessary** does not vary in a statistically significant fashion across the two examined values of **Pro-Military**, nor does the ACME of **Harmfulness**. However, the ACME of **Responsibility** does vary in a statistically significant way. More precisely, at **Pro-Military** values of .75, the ACME is -.14 and statistically significant. At **Pro-Military** values of .25, the ACME is .04 and also statistically significant.

I also conducted a moderated mediation analysis to examine whether the average causal mediation effect (ACME) of these three variables on **Punishment** varies between the case of a **Pro-Military** value of .25 and one of .75. The ACME of **Necessity** does not vary in a statistically significant way across the two values of **Pro-Military**, nor does the ACME of **Harmfulness**. In contrast, the ACME of **Responsibility** does vary across the two conditions in a statistically significant fashion. When **Pro-Military** is .75, the ACME of **Responsibility** is -.08 and statistically significant. In contrast, when **Pro-Military** is .25, the ACME of **Responsibility** is .02 and also statistically significant.

Overall, these results support the conclusions of the main analysis: responsibility mediates the relationship between **Armed Forces Perpetrator** and both **Wrongfulness** and **Punishment**, but that relationship varies based on how strong individuals' **Pro-Military** attitudes are.

D.2 Results with Controls

Table A9: Main Results with Control Variables

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
(Intercept)	18.80**	13.85**	−8.93	15.79**	4.21
	(6.58)	(4.32)	(7.13)	(5.86)	(5.87)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.03	0.12	0.18	0.10	0.81***
	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Pro-Military	−0.45°	0.02	0.42°	−0.17	1.37***
	(0.24)	(0.15)	(0.26)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Gender	0.10	0.08°	−0.14°	0.04	0.08
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Education	0.01	−0.00	−0.00	0.07	0.06
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Age	−0.01*	−0.00*	0.01°	−0.01*	−0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Income	0.02**	0.02**	−0.01	0.01	0.01*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Rural	−0.01	0.02	−0.04	0.01	0.00
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Victimized Gov	−0.20	−0.21*	0.13	0.24°	−0.31*
	(0.16)	(0.10)	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Victimized Guerrilla	0.04	0.02	0.14	0.04	0.12
	(0.10)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Security	0.11**	−0.12***	0.04	−0.00	0.04
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Pro-Military x Armed Forces Perp.	−0.01	−0.63**	−0.45	−0.48°	−2.20***
	(0.32)	(0.21)	(0.35)	(0.29)	(0.29)
R^2	0.03	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.06
Adj. R^2	0.02	0.04	0.00	0.01	0.05
Num. obs.	1378	1378	1377	1378	1375

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. Note that **Security** measures how respondents feel about the possibility of being a victim of assault or robery in their neighborhood; it thus captures a concept which is distinct from conflict-related victimization.

Table A10: Control Variable Interactions

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
(Intercept)	34.33***	8.85	−2.78	21.28**	11.30
	(9.14)	(6.00)	(9.93)	(8.16)	(8.16)
Armed Forces Perp.	−32.36*	11.32	−13.38	−10.76	−14.74
	(13.18)	(8.65)	(14.31)	(11.76)	(11.75)
Pro Military	−0.51*	0.08	0.36	−0.18	1.34***
	(0.24)	(0.16)	(0.26)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Gender	0.16°	0.12°	−0.13	0.10	0.16°
	(0.10)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Education	−0.00	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.09
	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Age	−0.02***	−0.00	0.00	−0.01*	−0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Income	0.01	0.01°	−0.02	0.01	−0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Rural	−0.03	0.02	−0.01	0.01	0.02
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Victimized Gov	−0.22	−0.12	0.04	0.33	−0.50*
	(0.24)	(0.16)	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Victimized Guerrilla	0.06	−0.10	0.22	0.02	0.14
	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Security	0.11°	−0.07°	0.03	−0.01	0.02
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Armed Forces Perp. x Pro Military	0.13	−0.73***	−0.35	−0.47	−2.15***
	(0.34)	(0.22)	(0.36)	(0.30)	(0.30)
Armed Forces Perp. x Woman	−0.11	−0.09	−0.00	−0.11	−0.16
	(0.14)	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Armed Forces Perp. x Education	0.01	−0.02	−0.07	0.12	−0.07
	(0.10)	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.08)
Armed Forces Perp. x Age	0.02*	−0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Armed Forces Perp. x Income	0.03*	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.04*
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Armed Forces Perp. x Rural	0.04	−0.00	−0.05	0.01	−0.05
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Armed Forces Perp. x Victimized Gov	0.05	−0.18	0.16	−0.17	0.31
	(0.32)	(0.21)	(0.35)	(0.29)	(0.29)
Armed Forces Perp. x Victimized Guerrilla	−0.06	0.21	−0.17	0.05	−0.07
	(0.20)	(0.13)	(0.22)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Armed Forces Perp. x Security	0.01	−0.11*	0.01	0.01	0.04
	(0.08)	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)
R^2	0.03	0.06	0.01	0.03	0.07
Adj. R^2	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.01	0.05
Num. obs.	1378	1378	1377	1378	1375

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{\circ}p < 0.1$

D.3 Excluding Respondents Who Failed Attention Check

Table A11: Excluding Respondents Who Failed the Attention Check

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
Intercept	3.57***	4.60***	2.61***	3.76***	3.01***
	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.11	0.03	0.14	0.22	0.91***
	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.14)
Pro-Military	−0.23	−0.12	0.28	−0.03	1.48***
	(0.24)	(0.16)	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Pro-Military x Armed Forces Perp.	−0.13	−0.37°	−0.41	−0.64*	−2.34***
	(0.33)	(0.22)	(0.36)	(0.30)	(0.30)
R^2	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.05
Adj. R^2	0.00	0.01	−0.00	0.01	0.05
Num. obs.	1264	1264	1264	1265	1263

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. The attention check was a repeated question about rurality with the responses reverse coded in the second version.

D.4 Alternatives to Pro-Military

Table A12: Confidence in the Military Instead of Pro-Military

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
(Intercept)	3.46***	4.54***	2.62***	3.67***	3.14***
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Armed Forces Perp.	−0.00	0.02	0.06	0.11	0.49***
	(0.12)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.11)
Confidence Military	−0.02	0.02	0.21	0.10	0.91***
	(0.14)	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Confidence Military x Armed Forces Perp.	0.12	−0.31*	−0.11	−0.35*	−1.11***
	(0.20)	(0.13)	(0.21)	(0.18)	(0.18)
R^2	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03
Adj. R^2	−0.00	0.01	−0.00	0.00	0.03
Num. obs.	1515	1515	1514	1516	1513

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table A13: Military Budget Increase Instead of Pro-Military

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
(Intercept)	3.35***	4.54***	2.65***	3.70***	3.34***
	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.14	−0.05	0.06	0.04	0.26**
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.09)
Budget Min Def	0.33*	0.00	0.23	0.05	0.77***
	(0.16)	(0.11)	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Budget Min Def x Armed Forces Perp.	−0.28	−0.27°	−0.17	−0.31	−1.00***
	(0.22)	(0.15)	(0.24)	(0.20)	(0.20)
R^2	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02
Adj. R^2	0.00	0.01	−0.00	0.00	0.02
Num. obs.	1523	1523	1521	1524	1520

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table A14: Accord Not Necessary Instead of Pro-Military

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
(Intercept)	3.67***	4.54***	2.74***	3.76***	3.43***
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.04	−0.06	0.13	0.04	0.33***
	(0.10)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Accord Not Necessary	−0.57***	0.02	−0.05	−0.10	0.40**
	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Accord Not Necessary x Armed Forces Perp.	0.11	−0.17	−0.27	−0.21	−0.93***
	(0.20)	(0.14)	(0.22)	(0.18)	(0.18)
R^2	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.02
Adj. R^2	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02
Num. obs.	1519	1519	1517	1521	1516

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table A15: Ideology Instead of Pro-Military

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
(Intercept)	3.49***	4.54***	2.52***	3.76***	3.06***
	(0.12)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Armed Forces Perp.	−0.18	0.08	0.13	−0.04	0.54***
	(0.17)	(0.11)	(0.18)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Ideology	−0.01	0.00	0.04°	−0.01	0.09***
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Ideology x Armed Forces Perp.	0.04	−0.04*	−0.03	−0.01	−0.11***
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
R^2	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02
Adj. R^2	0.00	0.01	0.00	−0.00	0.02
Num. obs.	1504	1503	1502	1503	1500

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

D.5 Treatment's Effect on Attitudes Toward the State

Table A16: Effect of Treatment on Attitudes Toward the State

	1. Confidence Nat Gov	2. Confidence Nat Gov	3. Ideology	4. Ideology	5. Gov. Responsible	6. Gov. Responsible
Intercept	1.05***	1.04***	3.82***	3.76***	0.10***	0.09***
	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.17)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Armed Forces Perp.	−0.05	−0.02	−0.13	−0.00	0.01	0.03
	(0.05)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.24)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Pro-Military	2.90***	2.93***	4.17***	4.34***	−0.14***	−0.12**
	(0.13)	(0.18)	(0.26)	(0.37)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Pro-Military x Armed Forces Perp.		−0.06		−0.32		−0.04
		(0.25)		(0.52)		(0.05)
R^2	0.26	0.26	0.15	0.15	0.02	0.02
Adj. R^2	0.26	0.26	0.15	0.15	0.02	0.02
Num. obs.	1489	1489	1485	1485	1531	1531

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001. "Confidence Nat Gov" is measured on a 1-5 scale, "Ideology" is measured on a 1-10 scale, and "Gov Responsible" is a binary variable indicating whether the respondent thinks that the state was primarily responsible for the violence that Colombia has experienced. These questions were asked after treatment, whereas the questions that make up the "Pro-Military" index were asked before treatment.

D.6 Excluding Antioquia Residents

Table A17: Excluding Respondents Who Live in Antioquia

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
Intercept	3.56***	4.51***	2.66***	3.69***	3.03***
	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.10)
Armed Forces Perp.	−0.00	0.12	0.19	0.16	0.79***
	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Pro-Military	−0.25	0.07	0.21	0.04	1.40***
	(0.24)	(0.16)	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Pro-Military x Armed Forces Perp.	0.05	−0.52*	−0.53	−0.56°	−2.15***
	(0.33)	(0.22)	(0.36)	(0.30)	(0.30)
R^2	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.04
Adj. R^2	−0.00	0.01	−0.00	0.00	0.04
Num. obs.	1302	1303	1301	1304	1301

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

D.7 Ordered Logit

Table A18: Ordered Logit

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment	3. Necessity	4. Harmfulness	5. Responsibility
Armed Forces Perp.	0.12	0.19	0.27	0.32	1.50***
	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.21)
Pro-Military	−0.37	0.35	0.41	−0.06	2.54***
	(0.32)	(0.36)	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.33)
Pro-Military x Armed Forces Perp.	−0.08	−1.30**	−0.60	−1.02*	−3.95***
	(0.44)	(0.49)	(0.45)	(0.45)	(0.47)
Cox-Snell Pseudo R^2	.00	.01	.00	.00	.05
Observations	1507	1507	1506	1509	1505

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

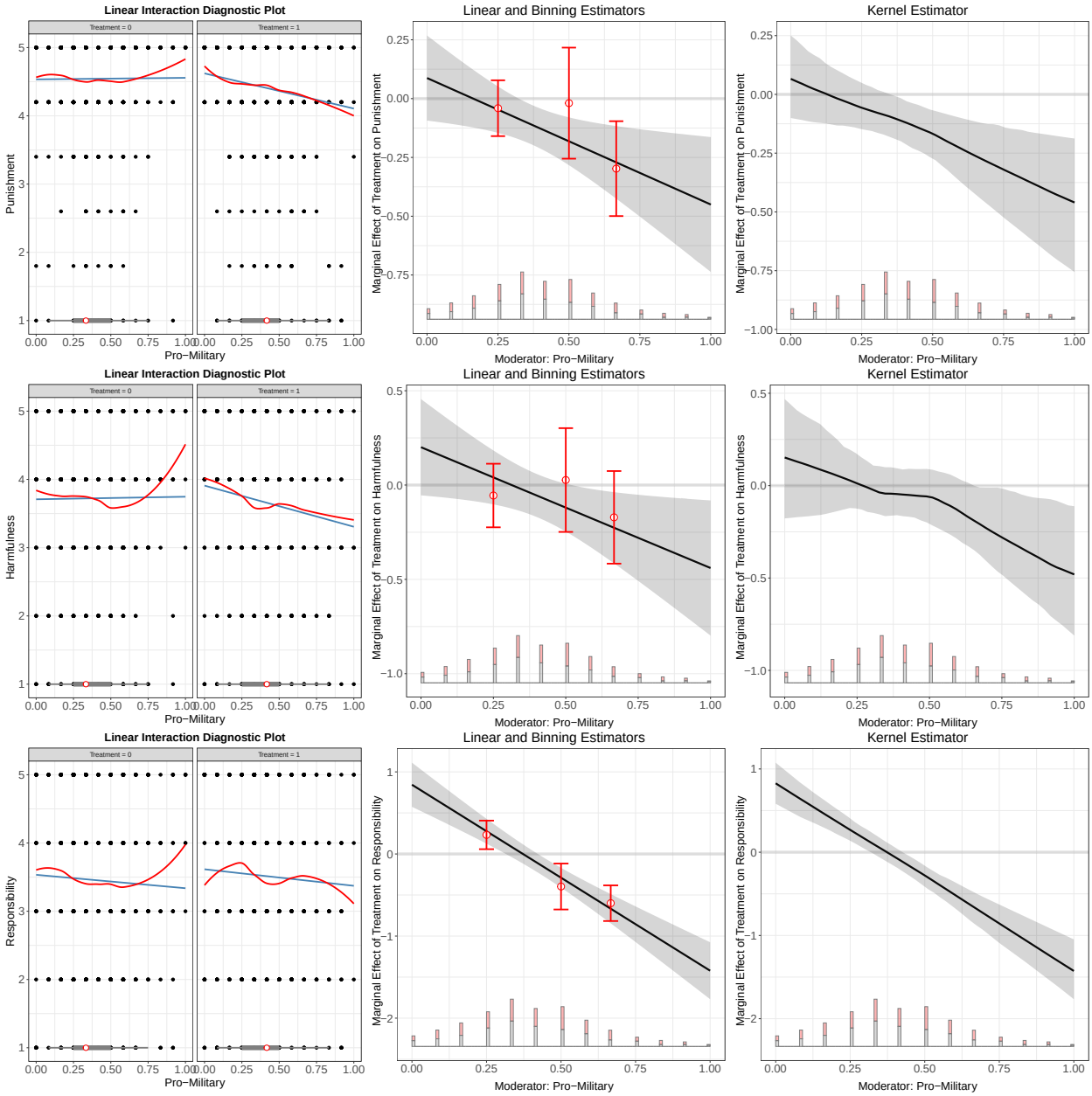
D.8 Assessing Inferences from Interactions

Table A19: Interaction Diagnostics from Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2019)

DV	**Same Effects at High vs. Low Moderator Levels?**	**Severe Extrapolation?**	**Reject Linear Model?**
Punishment	No	No	No
Harmfulness	No	No	No
Responsibility	No	No	No

Note: Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2019) reccomend three simple diagnostic tests to evaluate the quality of multiplicative interaction results. First, they suggest examining whether there are statistically different treatment effects at typical low (in this case, 25th percentile) and typical high (in this case, 75th percentile) levels of the moderator (**Pro-Military**). A lack of such differences would indicate a weak interaction. Second, they reccomend examining extrapolation with the use of an L-kurtosis score. A score of .12 is a normal distribution. They classify scores of .16 or more, which corresponds to the L-kurtosis of an exponential or logistic distribution, as exhibiting severe extrapolation. Results which rely on extrapolation are extremely sensitive to outliers. Third, they utilize a Wald-test to examine whether it is possible to reject a linear multiplicative interaction model by comparing it to a more flexible model with multiple bins (in this case, three bins which divide the data into terciles). It is important to note that the p-value for the Wald test for the interaction between **Harmfulness** and **Pro-Military** is statistically significant to the .1 level.

Figure A2: Alternative Interaction Estimators from Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2019)

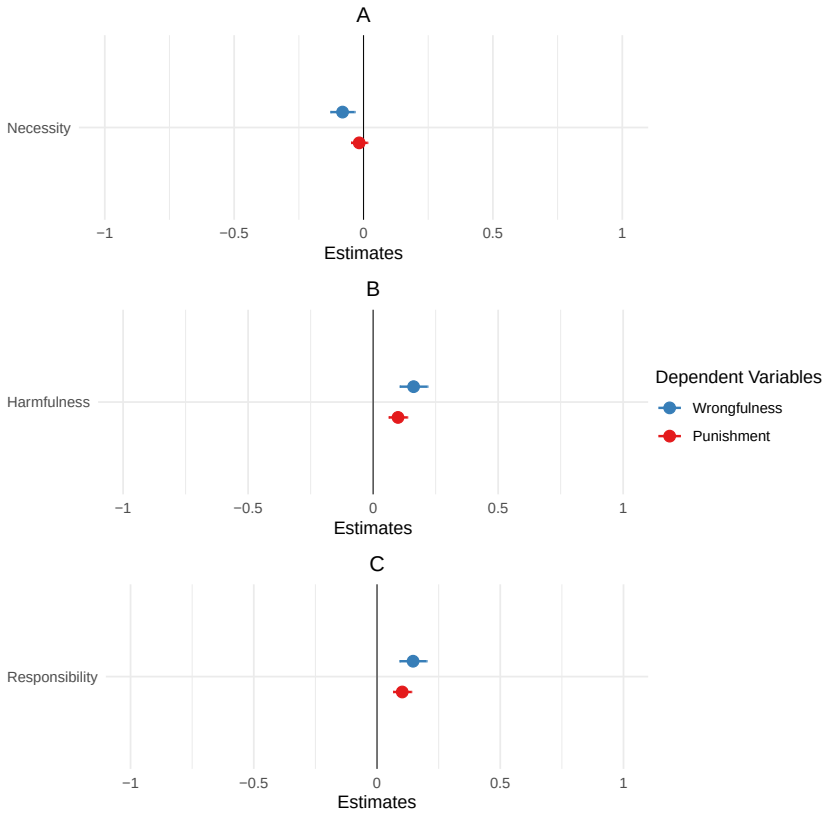


Note: The linear interaction diagnostic plots on the leftmost panels show the linear regression line (blue) and a locally estimated scatterplot smoothing, or LOESS (red). A LOESS approach makes no assumptions about the underlying data structure. If the two lines considerably diverge, the true marginal effect may be nonlinear. The middle panels show linear marginal-effect estimates (black lines) and a binning estimator (red dots) designed by (Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu 2019). This binning estimator breaks the moderator, in this case **Pro-Military**, into terciles and creates a dummy variable for each. The approach then estimates a model that includes interaction between the median of each bin and the treatment. The advantage of this approach is that it does not require an assumption of a linear effect. Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2019) note that, "when the estimates from the binning estimator are far off from the line or when they are non-monotonic, we have evidence that the LIE [linear interaction effect] assumption does not hold" (p. 173). The rightmost panel uses a kernel smoothing estimator of the marginal effect; it estimates a number of local effects. The kernel estimator can produce linear or a range of nonlinear effects.

E Judgements of Actions and Moral Judgements

Figure A3 (models 1-6, Table A20) examines whether judgements of the action affect moral judgement. Panels B and C show that **Harmfulness** and **Responsibility** are positively correlated with **Wrongfulness** and **Punishment**. Compared to violence with a "very small" number of victims, abuse with a "very large" number is characterized as .64 points more morally wrong and its perpetrators as deserving .40 points more punishment (on 1-5 scales). Compared when it is "very unlikely" that group leaders were responsible for the violence, when it is "very likely" that they were, the violence is characterized as .60 points more morally wrong and worthy of punishment .40 points harsher.[33] **Necessity** is correlated with **Wrongfulness** but not **Punishment**. These results provide support for the *Harmfulness Hypothesis* and the *Responsibility Hypothesis* but only partial support for the *Necessity Hypothesis*: people who judge violence to be less harmful or less likely to be organized by group leadership perceive it as less morally wrong and less worthy of harsh punishment. The results are robust to controlling for a range of variables (models 7-12 Table A20). However, it is important to be cautious about interpreting these results because both the independent and dependent variables were measured post-treatment.

[33].8-points on the punishment scale is the difference between lifetime incarceration and 15 years in prison.



Note: Numeric results can be found in models 1-6 of A20. Panel A shows the negative correlation between **Necessity** and **Wrongfulness** but no correlation between **Necessity** and **Punishment**. This provides mixed support for *Cause Bias Hypothesis 1*, which states that people who believe violence is militarily necessary are less likely to characterize the violence as morally wrong and its perpetrators as deserving harsh punishment. Panels B shows the negative correlation between **Harmfulness** and both **Punishment** and **Moral Wrongfulness**, and panel C shows the negative correlation between **Responsibility** and these two variables. Panels B and C provide support for the *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 1* and *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 1*; these state that respondents who believe that violence causes more harm or who believe that armed group leadership is responsible for the violence are more likely to believe that the violence is morally wrong and its perpetrators should be harshly punished.

Figure A3: The Effects of Judgements of the Action on Moral Judgements

Table A20: The Effects of Judgements of the Action on Moral Judgements

	1. Wrong-fulness	2. Punish-ment	3. Wrong-fulness	4. Punish-ment	5. Wrong-fulness	6. Punish-ment	7. Wrong-fulness	8. Punish-ment	9. Wrong-fulness	10. Punish-ment	11. Wrong-fulness	12. Punish-ment
(Intercept)	3.70***	4.53***	2.89***	4.11***	2.96***	4.12***	13.00*	11.58**	11.81°	10.45*	13.87*	10.55*
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.07)	(6.38)	(4.22)	(6.34)	(4.18)	(6.36)	(4.18)
Necessary	−0.08***	−0.02					−0.08***	−0.01				
	(0.02)	(0.02)					(0.02)	(0.02)				
Severity			0.16***	0.10***					0.16***	0.10***		
			(0.03)	(0.02)					(0.03)	(0.02)		
Responsibility					0.15***	0.10***					0.14***	0.10***
					(0.03)	(0.02)					(0.03)	(0.02)
Gender							0.09	0.07	0.10	0.07	0.10	0.07
							(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.04)
Education							0.01	−0.00	−0.00	−0.01	−0.00	−0.01
							(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Age							−0.00	−0.00°	−0.00	−0.00	−0.01°	−0.00
							(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Income							0.02**	0.02**	0.02**	0.02**	0.02*	0.02**
							(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Rural							−0.01	0.02	−0.01	0.02	−0.01	0.03
							(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Victimized Gov							−0.08	−0.16	−0.13	−0.19°	−0.04	−0.12
							(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.10)
Victimized Guerrilla							0.02	0.00	0.02	0.00	−0.01	−0.01
							(0.10)	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.06)
Security							0.12**	−0.13***	0.11**	−0.12***	0.11**	−0.13***
							(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)
R^2	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.05
Adj. R^2	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.05
Num. obs.	1523	1523	1525	1525	1522	1522	1388	1388	1390	1390	1386	1386

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

F Exploratory Analysis: Centrists

Table A21: Replace Pro-Military with Both Responsible, Subset of Data

	1. Wrongfulness	2. Punishment
Intercept	3.63***	4.04***
	(0.22)	(0.14)
Armed Forces Perp.	−0.46	0.28
	(0.30)	(0.19)
Both Responsible	−0.16	0.57***
	(0.23)	(0.14)
Both Responsible x Armed Forces Perp.	0.51	−0.41*
	(0.31)	(0.20)
R^2	0.00	0.02
Adj. R^2	0.00	0.02
Num. obs.	970	970

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

G Deviations from the Pre-Analysis Plan

Below are the hypotheses from the Pre-Analysis Plan (PAP) for this project.

- (PAP) *Punishment Hypothesis 1:* People are less likely to believe that the perpetrators should be harshly punished when violence against civilians is committed by their preferred armed group compared to when it is committed by an armed group they oppose.
- (PAP) *Punishment Hypothesis 2:* The stronger an individual's preferences are for an armed group, the larger the effect size hypothesized above will be.
- (PAP) *Cause Bias Hypothesis 1:* People are more likely to believe that violence against civilians is necessary for the achievement of military goals when it is committed by their preferred group compared to when it is committed by an armed group they oppose.
- (PAP) *Cause Bias Hypothesis 2:* The stronger an individual's preferences are for an armed group, the larger the effect size hypothesized above will be.
- (PAP) *Cause Bias Hypothesis 3:* People who believe that violence against civilians is necessary for the achievement of military goals are less likely to believe that the violence is morally wrong and its perpetrators should be strongly punished.
- (PAP) *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 1:* People are more likely to believe that violence against civilians causes relatively little harm when it is committed by their preferred group compared to when it is committed by an armed group they oppose.
- (PAP) *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 2:* The stronger an individual's preferences are for an armed group, the larger the effect size hypothesized above will be.
- (PAP) *Consequences Bias Hypothesis 3:* People who believe that violence against civilians causes relatively little harm are less likely to believe that the violence is morally wrong and its perpetrators should be strongly punished.
- (PAP) *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 1:* People are less likely to believe that the armed group as a whole is responsible for the violence when it is committed by their preferred group compared to when it is committed by an armed group they oppose.
- (PAP) *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 2:* The stronger an individual's preferences are for an armed group, the larger the effect size hypothesized above will be.

- (PAP) *Responsibility Bias Hypothesis 3:* People who believe that the armed group as a whole is responsible for the violence are less likely to believe that the violence is morally wrong and its perpetrators should be strongly punished.

There are several small differences in language to note. First, the titles for the hypotheses in the manuscript have been changed from those in the PAP n order to convey more clearly their content. Second, the PAP hypotheses refer to individuals' "preferred armed group" while the manuscript refers to individuals' "preferred side." Third, the PAP hypotheses concerning responsibility refer to "the armed group as a whole" whereas the manuscript's hypotheses refer to "armed group leadership." Third, the variable labeled **Harmfulness** in the manuscript was called **Severity** in the PAP. In terms of processing the data, the rescaling of several variables was not discussed in the PAP but does not affect the results. None of these changes affect the survey design, survey instrument, or interpretation of the results.

More importantly, all PAP hypotheses numbered 2 have been combined with the PAP hypotheses numbered 1. While writing the paper, I found three reasons to combine them. First, PAP hypotheses 1 are nested within PAP hypotheses 2; PAP hypotheses 2 contemplate the possibility that the phenomenon described in PAP hypotheses 1 varies by the strength of preference. Second, in combining these two sets of hypotheses, I have prioritized for parsimony the models with fewer assumptions. In the PAP, I assumed that the sample would, on average, be more supportive of the military than of the guerrillas. Thus, in terms of testing PAP hypotheses 1, I predicted that respondents on average would characterize guerrilla violence as more morally wrong, more worthy of harsher punishment, less militarily necessary, more harmful, and more likely to be the responsibility of group leadership compared to military violence. The hypotheses discussed in the manuscript do not require an assumption about the average preferences of the sample. Lastly, an examination of the data led me to reconsider the assumption that the sample would strongly prefer the Armed Forces. As Table A22 shows, in models which do not take into account **Pro-Military** attitudes or their interaction with the treatment, the treatment **Armed Forces Perpetrator** affects only perceptions of appropriate **Punishment** but not any other dependent variables.

Table A22: Non-Interactive Results

	1: Moral Wrongfulness	2: Punishment	3: Necessity	4: Harmfulness	5: Responsibility
Intercept	3.45***	4.55***	2.72***	3.72***	3.58***
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Armed Forces Perp.	0.06	−0.13**	0.01	−0.06	−0.04
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
R^2	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
Adj. R^2	-0.00	0.01	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
Num. obs.	1527	1527	1525	1528	1524
RMSE	1.27	0.85	1.36	1.14	1.15

Note: °p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.