

Electoral Competition, Local Political Orders, and Criminal Violence,

Analysis of the Assassination of Social and Civic Leaders in Colombia

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"Trabajo preparado para su presentación en el X Congreso Latinoamericano de Ciencia Política (ALACIP), organizado conjuntamente por la Asociación Latinoamericana de Ciencia Política, la Asociación Mexicana de Ciencia Política y el Tecnológico de Monterrey, 31 de julio, 1, 2 y 3 de agosto 2019"

Eje temático Comportamiento Político Electoral y Liderazgos

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1. Introduction

Colombia's prospects for sustainable peace and the successful implementation of the peace agreement between the government and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) have been stained by the number of assassinated civic and social leaders (Kroc Institute 2019). Around 384 civic and social leaders were murdered between 2016 and July 4, 2018 (Böll Stiftung - Indepaz 2018), i.e. towards the end of peace negotiations and the implementation of the peace agreement. While data for all cases in 2018 is still unavailable, it is widely believed that there was a dramatic increase throughout 2018 in the midst of national legislative and presidential elections.¹ The assassination of civic and social leaders continues in 2019 and could potentially worsen as local elections near.²

What explains this violence? In this paper, we offer a preliminary exploration of the connection between violence against civic leaders and the dynamics of political competition at the municipal level. Although the presence of criminal groups, the cultivation of coca, and illegal mineral extraction are important factors to understand the spatial distribution of assassinated leaders across the country's over 1,100 municipalities, we argue that the nature of local political competition also impacts the likelihood that a civic leader will be assassinated. In particular, we contend that characteristics of local political orders (fragmentation or concentration of political and electoral power) and/or the credible entry of new (competitive) political forces of the left creates incentives for established politicians—in conjunction with criminal and neo-paramilitary groups—to use violence to sustain the local political status quo. Thus, the assassination of civic

¹ See, for example: <https://colombia2020.elespectador.com/pais/siguen-matando-lideres-sociales-un-ano-despues-del-acuerdo-de-paz>

² See for example: Fundación PARES. 2019. "SIPARES – Primer Informe de Violencia y Dinámica Electoral", Bogotá.

and social leaders seeks not only to preserve and protect illegal economies, but sustain local forms of political and social order that also are challenged by new political actors.

We use a cross-sectional dataset of Colombian municipalities to assess our claims, exploring if municipal level party system fragmentation and the left's vote share are associated with levels of violence against civic and social leaders. We control for conventional explanations such as overall levels of violent crime, the presence of illicit economies and non-state armed actors, among others. We find that in more fragmented local party systems—which we interpret to be more plural settings for local electoral competition—we are less likely to observe violent events against civic and social leaders and, on average, none or fewer cases of assassinations. In contrast, a higher share of vote for leftist parties is associated with a higher probability of occurrence and intensity of violence against civic and social leaders. These preliminary findings provide some tentative evidence indicating that violence against civic and social leaders follows systematic patterns and that beyond “criminal” motivations, they reflect struggles to reshape local political and social orders.

We begin the paper with a brief discussion about the relevance of violence against political, civic, and social activists in past and current attempts to negotiate and implement peace agreements in Colombia. We also provide an overview of the spatial and temporal variation of this form of political violence in Colombia's current post-conflict scenario. We follow with a brief description of our central hypotheses, as well as some alternative (or complementary) hypotheses that help us understand the logic behind violence against social leaders. We then provide a quantitative assessment of the hypotheses and conclude with a brief discussion of our findings and implications for future research.

2. Post-Conflict and the Assassination of Social and Civic Leaders

It is not surprising that the protection of opposition party members, civic and social leaders, as well as human rights defenders, was an important aspect of the negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC and anchored in point 2.1.2.2. of the agreement (see “Acuerdo Final”). During Colombia’s long armed conflict—but also after successful peace processes—have been marked by considerable violence against social movement leaders and opposition or progressive political activists and leaders (CINEP et al. 2019). For example, the systematic assassination (over 3,000) and overall victimization (over 6,000) of militants and leaders of the *Unión Patriótica* (UP)³—a political party that emerged during the failed negotiations between the Betancur government and the FARC in the 1980s—not only shaped discussions in the negotiations of Havana but also foreshadowed the potential for violence in the aftermath of a successful negotiation.

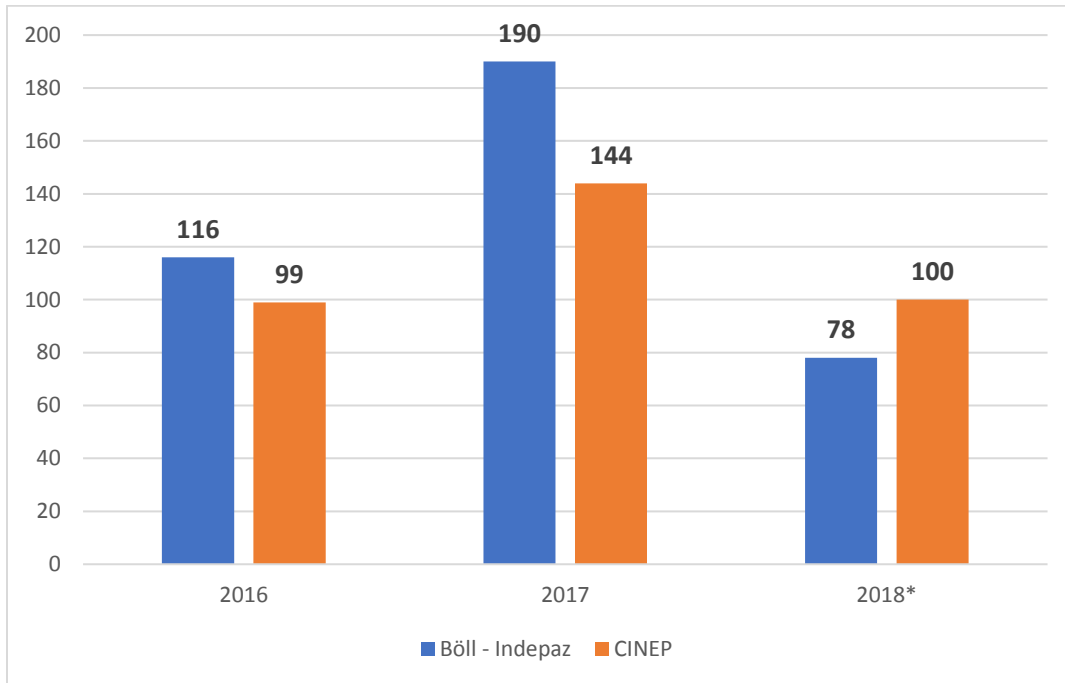
There were several reasons to suspect violence against civic and social leaders in the post-conflict setting. First, several non-state armed groups would continue to operate in Colombia after the FARC’s demobilization: neo-paramilitary groups (“BACRIM”, or *Bandas Criminales*) and other territorially based criminal groups, as well as the ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional* or National Liberation Army) guerrilla. As did the FARC (see, for example, Arjona 2017), these groups tend to construct local social and political orders, in many cases with knowledge by and even in alliance with state actors. The control of criminal groups over political processes, especially in peripheral areas (Duncan 2014), has profound negative implications for

³ The case of the UP is subject to analysis of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, see: <https://colombia2020.elespectador.com/justicia/caso-union-patriotica-sera-resuelto-en-la-corte-interamericana-de-derechos-humanos>

social and civic leaders that challenge local political orders. As we will discuss later, it is not only that many non-state armed actors are involved in illicit economies that threatens the lives of social movement leaders. Violence against these leaders is a *feature* of local political orders that, among other things, protect illicit activities.

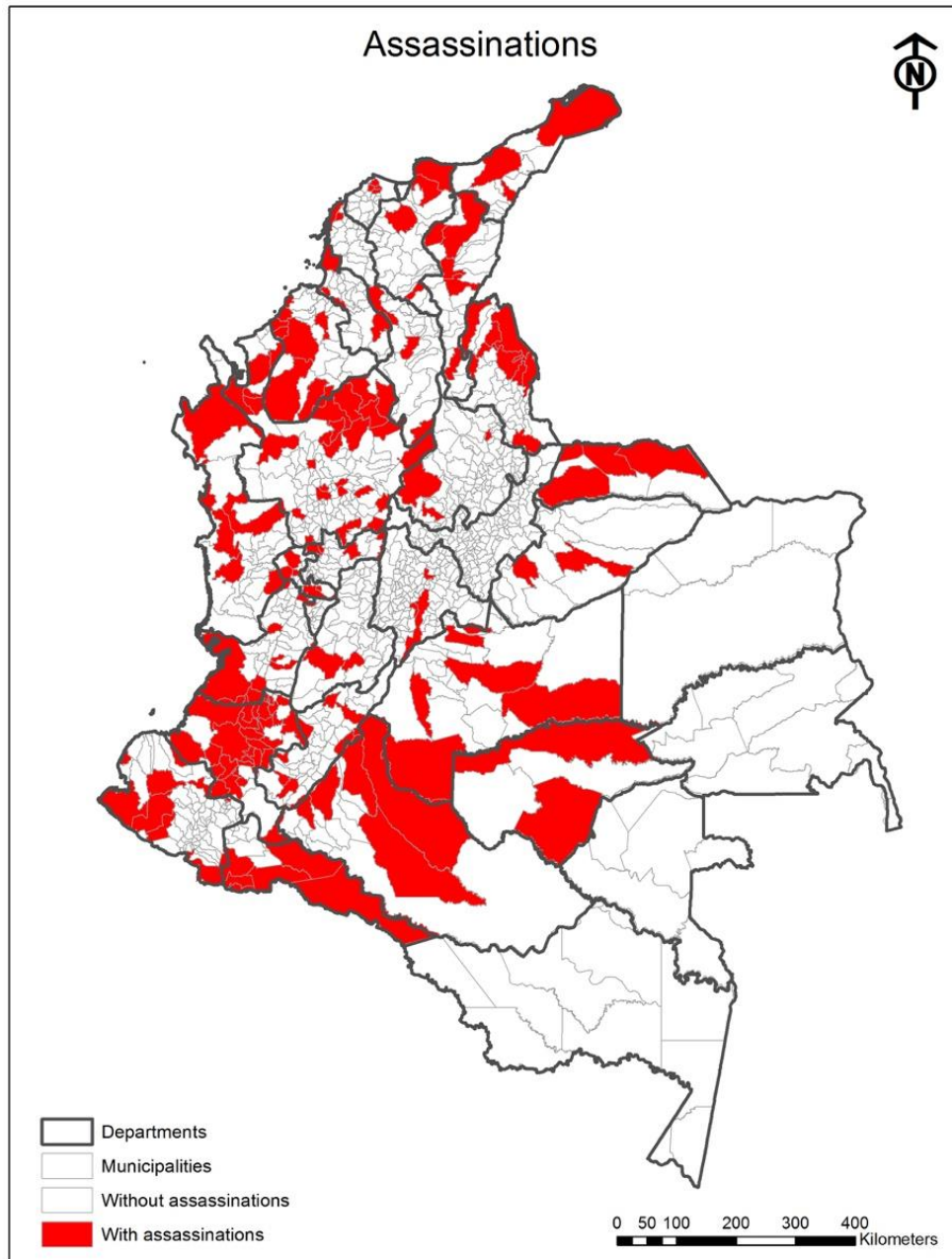
Unfortunately, the (expected) violence against civic and social leaders, as well as human rights advocates, in the post-conflict setting materialized and has been the subject of concern and warning by international academic and intergovernmental organizations that monitor the implementation of the peace agreement (Kroc Institute 2019; UNHCHR 2019). Between 2016 and July 2018, an estimated 343 (CINEP et al. 2018) or 384 (Böll-Indepaz 2018) civic and social leaders were assassinated in Colombia (see Figure 1). As Figure 2 and 3 show, there is considerable spatial variation in the occurrence and intensity of violence against social movement and civic leaders. Although there are some municipalities (e.g. Tumaco) and *departamentos* (or provinces, e.g. Cauca, Antioquia, Nariño, and Putumayo) in which the occurrence and intensity of this violence is most severe, it is present across the country and in plurality of *departamentos*. How do we explain this violence?

Figure 1: Assassination of Civic and Social Leaders in Colombia by Year



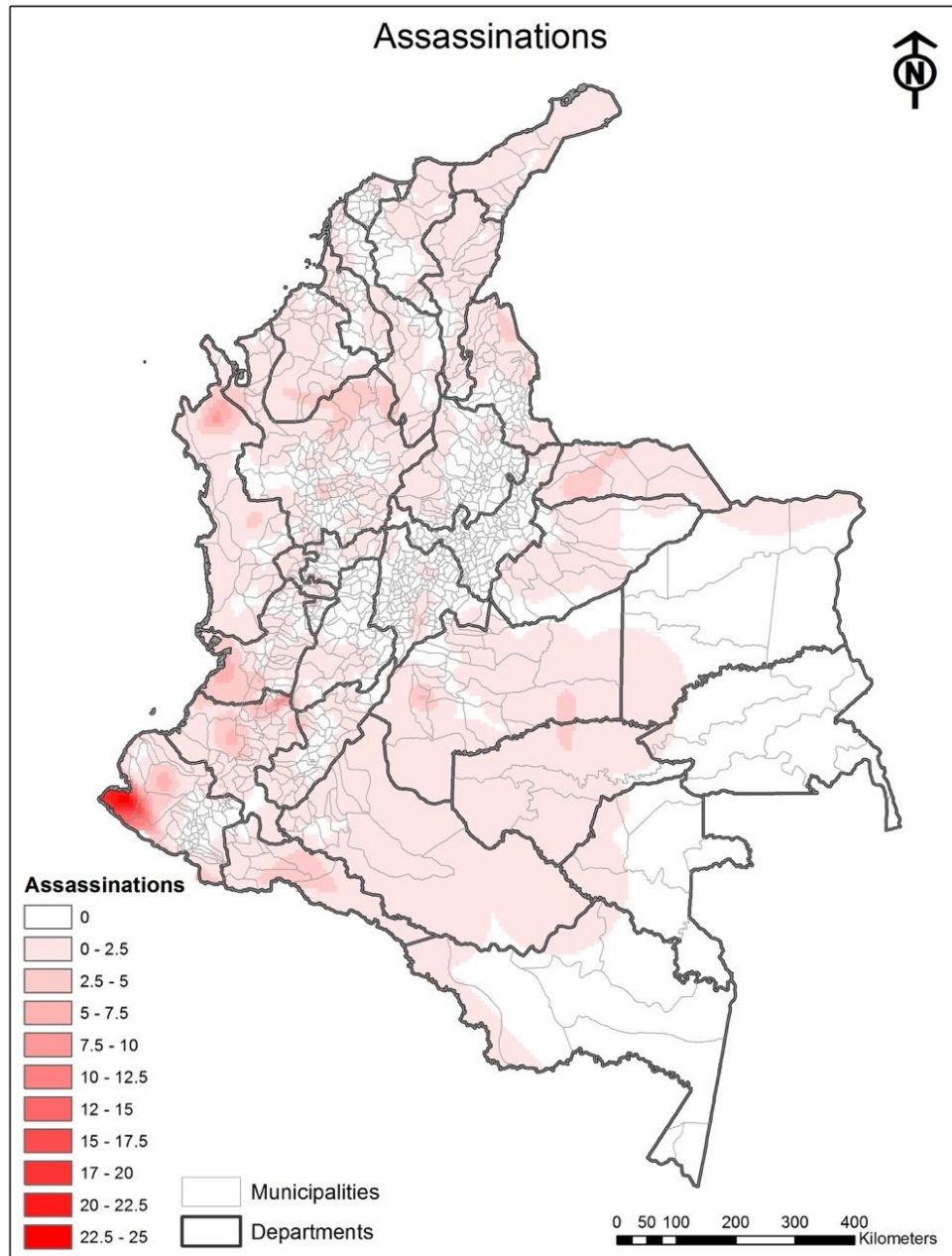
Data: Heinrich Böll Stiftung-Indepaz & CINEP et al.; *2018 reports only available until July 4, 2018 (Böll-Indepaz, 2018) and July 3, 2018 (CINEP et al, 2018).

Figure 2: Assassination of Civic and Social Leaders by Municipality (Occurrence)



Map made by Authors with data from Böll Stiftung-Indepaz

Figure 3: Assassination of Civic and Social Leaders by Municipality (Intensity)



Map made by Authors with data from Böll Stiftung-Indepaz

3. Explanations & Hypotheses

We focus on three (complementary) set of explanations about the assassination of civic and social leaders. In Colombia, the assassination of these leaders has been linked to the importance of illicit economies and the presence of criminal (armed) actors. Furthermore, these conditions as inevitably related to the limited capacity of the Colombian state to effectively penetrate all of its territory. While we agree that illicit economies, the presence of non-state armed actors, and limited state capacity are important factors impacting violence against social movement leaders, we also think that the nature of local political and social orders profoundly influences the use of violence against them. In the following we briefly discuss each

Illegal Economies and Presence of Non-State Armed Actors

Commonly advanced explanations for the assassination of civil and social movement leaders in Colombia focus on the presence of illegal economies, criminal groups, and non-state armed groups. Civic and social movement leaders are assumed to be a hindrance to the control of lucrative illicit markets (illegal mining, drug production and trade, state revenues etc.).

Therefore, when social movement leaders resist attempts by criminal and other armed group to maximize their revenue, they are assassinated by these groups. Similar behavior was observed from insurgent groups vis-à-vis local government authorities during Colombia's most recent civil war. For example, the growing size of municipal resources that resulted from the decentralization process of the 1980s and early 1990s created incentives for insurgents' groups to target local officials (Chacón 2013; Eaton 2006, among others). Likewise, Trejo and Ley (2016a) observe a

similar behavior from Drug Trafficking Organizations in Mexico. These organizations have expanded their sources of revenue to include the extortion of public officers and legal businesses. If local politicians refuse to pay a portion of municipal tax revenue to DTOs, they face lethal violence. In this sense, *we should expect a higher probability of observing violence against social movement and civic leaders, as well as a higher count of violent incidents, in municipalities with a greater density of illegal economies (drugs, mining). We should also to see a higher probability of observing violence against civic and social leaders in municipalities with presence of non-state armed groups.*

State Capacity

The Colombian state has historically been regarded as having a limited capacity to enforce its rules (Albarracín and Daly, forthcoming). Although the national state has been characterized by a growing capacity in some issue areas and has gained considerable coercive and extractive capacity in the last decade (Gutiérrez Sanín 2010; Flores-Macías 2014), it remains “differentially” present throughout its territory (González 2003; see also Rasmussen and Valencia 2018). In many urban areas, and particularly in capital cities, the Colombian state exhibits greater capacity to regulate social life—including the monopoly of the use of force and of conflict adjudication—than more peripheral municipalities. Given the limited capacity (and willingness) of the state in peripheral areas to sustain democratic local social orders and protect social movements leaders, *we should expect a higher probability of observing violence against social movement and civic leaders, as well as a higher count of violent incidents, in municipalities with lower levels of state capacity.*

Political Competition and Power Vacuums

The differential presence of the Colombian state is the result of historical processes whereby the central state (informally) delegated upon local elites the control of local social and political orders in exchange for their allegiance to the central state. In this way, the Colombian national state did not have to incur in the costs of state-building in the periphery, while maintaining its stability. Furthermore, the resulting local political and social orders reflected the preferences of local elites, the majority of which created exclusionary local social orders (Robinson 2013). In many of these peripheral areas, local elites are later substituted or co-opted by criminal groups. These groups do not only engage in illicit activities, but effectively govern and provide public goods (security, dispute settlement) that the central state is unable or unwilling to do (Duncan 2014). It is these exclusionary and often authoritarian local political orders that civic and social leaders face and often challenge. Moreover, these local orders—and the elites who sustain them—are not shy about using violence to repress potential challengers.

The dynamics of local political competition, therefore, should be strongly correlated with violence against civic and social movement leaders. In areas with higher levels of political competitions—i.e. more plural local communities—*we should observe less violence against civic and social activists.*⁴

Challengers (social movement leaders and activists) are more likely to be a target of violence when they are also part of the opposition to the national government. As the work of Trejo and

⁴ Similar dynamics have been observed with criminal groups, as political competition can shape their need to use violence to guarantee protection (from prosecution or other criminal groups) provided by political authorities. In more plural and competitive political environments, when there are more political actors providing access to the state, criminal groups are less likely to use of violence to insure state protection (Olivieri and Sberna 2014). At the same time, however, a more fragmented party system also increases a politician's willingness look for alliances with criminal groups as a way to gain an advantage over competitors (De Feo and De Luca 2017).

Ley (2016b) for the case of Mexico shows, when a local politician belongs to an opposition party, upper levels of government have a strong incentive to withhold support, making him or her vulnerable to the attacks of local armed groups. In the case of Colombia, legal leftist political forces have been targeted by non-state armed actors, often in collusion with some state actors (Albarracín, Gamboa, and Mainwaring 2018). Some of these leftist forces, moreover, more clearly present a threat to established local powers. *Therefore, in areas with high support for leftist parties we should observe more violence against civic and social activists.*

Abrupt changes in local orders can lead to power vacuums in which aspiring elites (for example, armed actors) try to establish themselves as the new rulers. In a context of power struggle, it should be expected that there is a higher probability that civic and social leaders are assassinated. In Colombia's post-conflict setting, for example, we should expect that the FARC's demobilization should leave a power vacuum or destabilize local equilibria in areas in which the FARC was present before the agreement. The absence of the FARC, that established itself as a rebel ruler or at least influenced local orders in areas across the country should therefore be associated with a higher probability of observing violence against social movement leaders.

4. Data

Dependent Variable

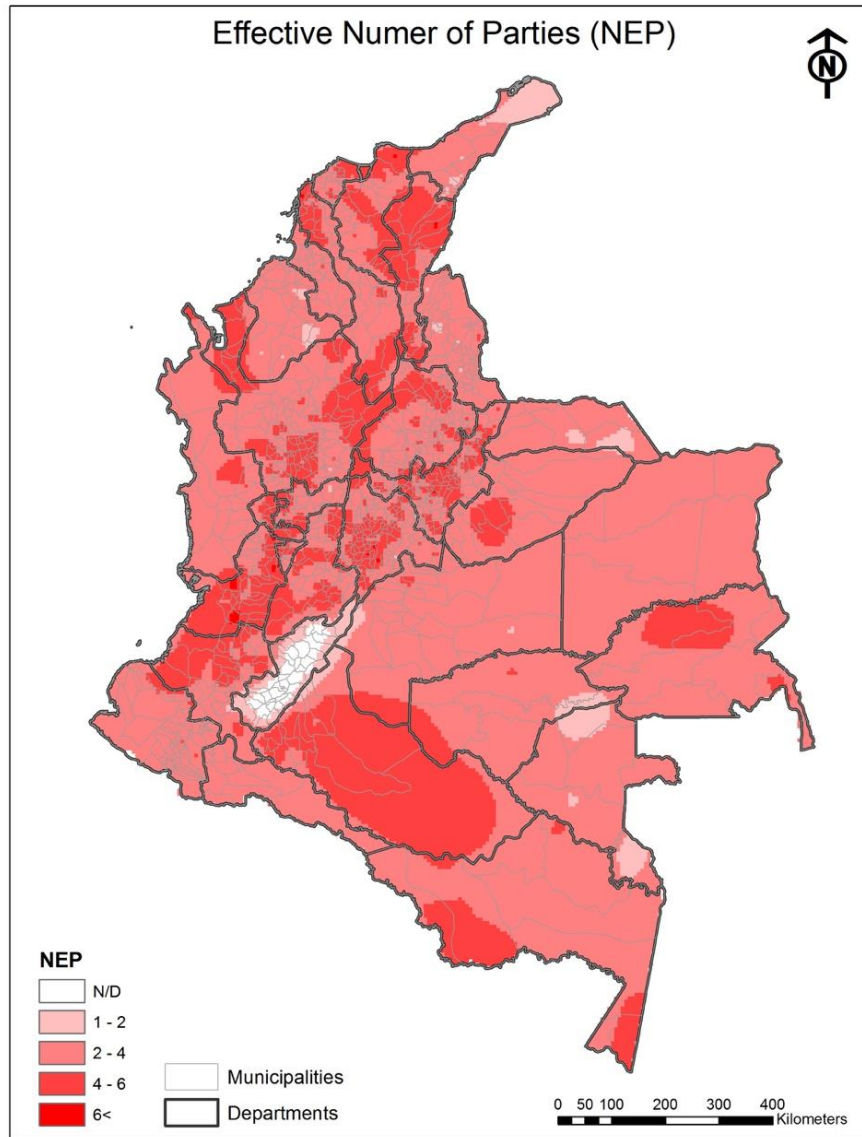
We use two measures of to gauge violence against civil and social movement leaders. A first variable measures the *occurrence of violence* in each Colombian municipality. We create a dummy variable in which 1 means that at least one assassination happened in the municipality between 2016 and July 2018 and zero if no assassination was observed. We further measure the

intensity of violence by counting all the assassinations of social leaders that occurred in a municipality in the same time frame. Data for these variables was obtained from the listing of assassinated social and civic compiled by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung in Colombia and Indepaz (2018)

Independent Variables

In this paper, we have three independent variables of central interest. On the one hand, we are interested in measuring how concentrated political power can be in a municipality. We chose the effective number of parties (Laakso and Taagepera 1979) to measure how fragmented the party system is in each municipality, assuming that greater fragmentation indicates a lower level of power concentration. With data from Pachón and Sánchez (2014), we use electoral results from congressional elections in 2014 at the municipal level to calculate the municipal effective number of parties. As Table 1 shows, the mean municipal effective number of parties is 3.70, with a minimum of 1.1 and a maximum value of 7.3.

Figure 4: Municipal Effective Number of Parties

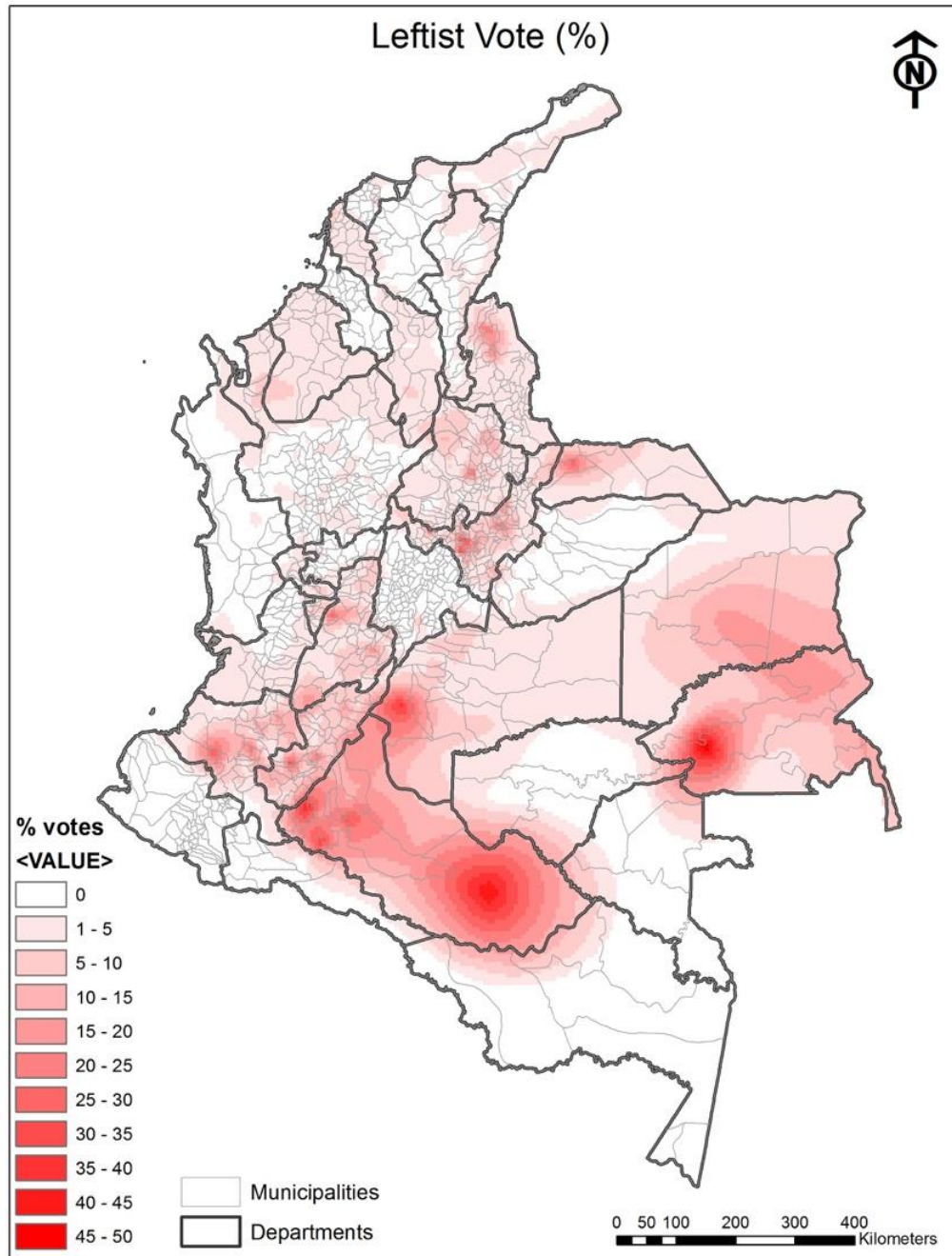


Map made by authors with data from Pachón and Sánchez (2014)

Our second independent variable is the strength of the leftist parties in the municipality. We use electoral results from congressional elections in 2014 at the municipal level (Pachón and Sánchez 2014) to calculate the share of leftist parties' vote in every municipality. For a “conservative” measure of what qualifies as a leftist party, we only classified the Unión Patriótica, the Polo Democrático, the Movimiento Alternativo Indígena y Social, and the Alianza Social Independiente as leftist parties (i.e. we excluded the center-left green party Alianza Verde from this list).

To determine areas with a high risk of experiencing the collapse or transformation of local political orders in the aftermath of the FARC's demobilization we created a dummy variable indicating if the FARC had an active presence in that municipality between 2010-2014. With data from the municipal panel of CEDE (*Centro de Estudios sobre Desarrollo Económico*, Universidad de los Andes, see Acevedo and Bornacelly 2014), we coded municipalities as having FARC presence when there was at least one capture of a FARC combatant or a battle-related death of a FARC combatant or a homicide committed by a FARC member.

Figure 5: Leftist Vote Share by Municipality



Map made by authors with data from Pachón and Sánchez (2014)

Other variables of interest

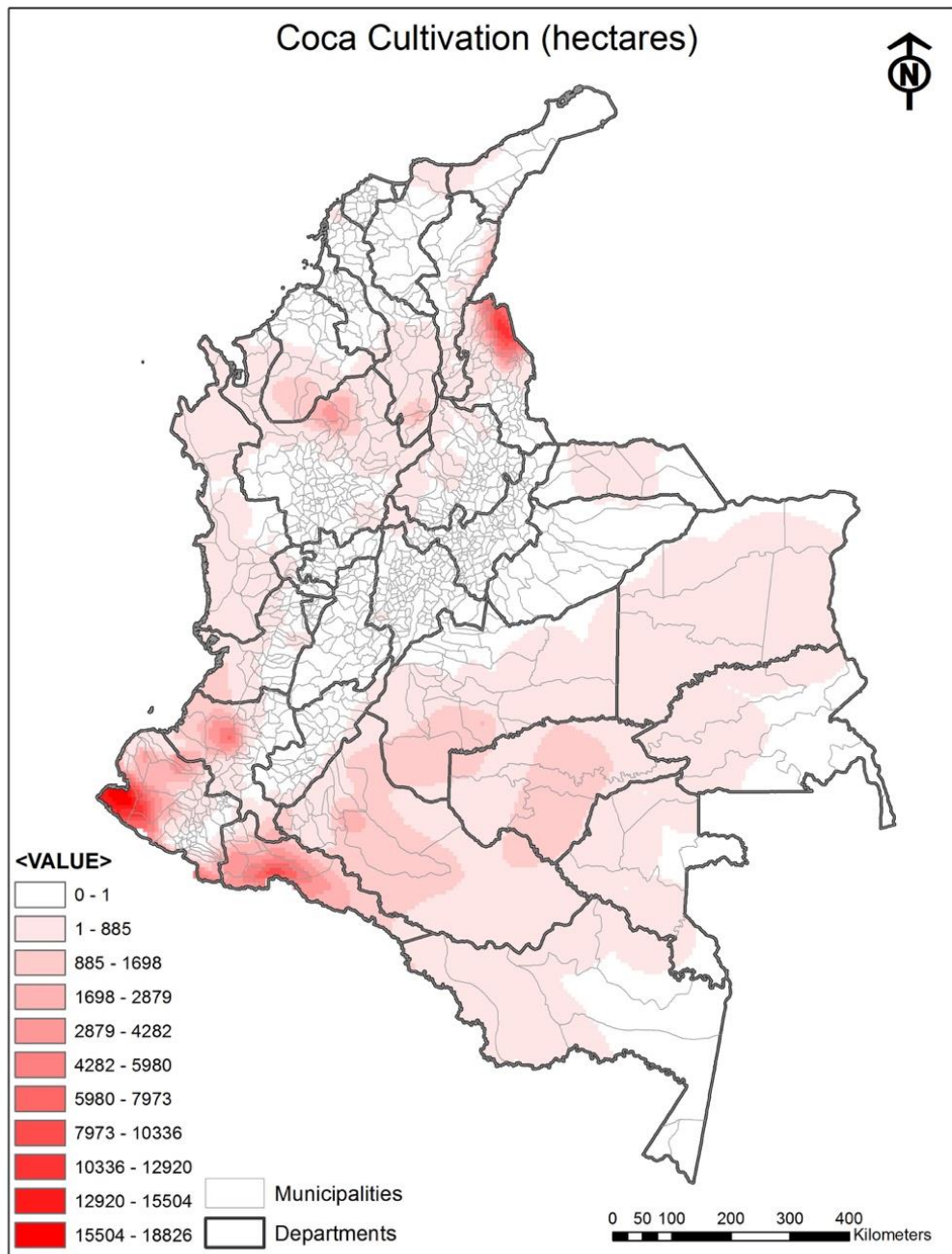
In our analysis we control for the count of conflicts associated with mineral extraction in each municipality. Data from this variable was obtained from the *Base de Datos de Conflictos Sociales Minero-Energético* from the Fundación Paz y Reconciliación. To measure the impact of illegal economies on violence against civic and social movement leaders we use data from the UNODC's (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) *Sistema Integrado de Monitoreo de Cultivos Ilícitos* (SIMCI) to measure the percent change in coca cultivation in each municipality between 2015 and 2016, as well as administrative data of the Colombian governments monitoring gold production in ounces.

For our measure of state capacity, we use the national government's Planning Department (DNP) measure of municipal performance (*medición de desempeño municipal*), a composite index that includes measures of local government taxation and fiscal management, as well as performance measure like the provision of public goods. The variable ranges from 0 to 100, being 100 the best possible local state performance. To determine the presence of non-state armed actors like the Bacrim and the ELN, we also use data from the municipal panel of CEDE from 2010-2014 and follow the same procedure used to determine FARC presence, i.e. consider the arrests, battle-related deaths, and homicides by these groups.

Finally, we also use administrative data from the Colombian government—provided through its data transparency website⁵ to measure the homicide rate per 1,000 inhabitants—as a proxy for the level of violence in the municipality—and the population size. Figures 6,7, and 8 show the spatial distribution of some of the control throughout Colombia. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for these variables.

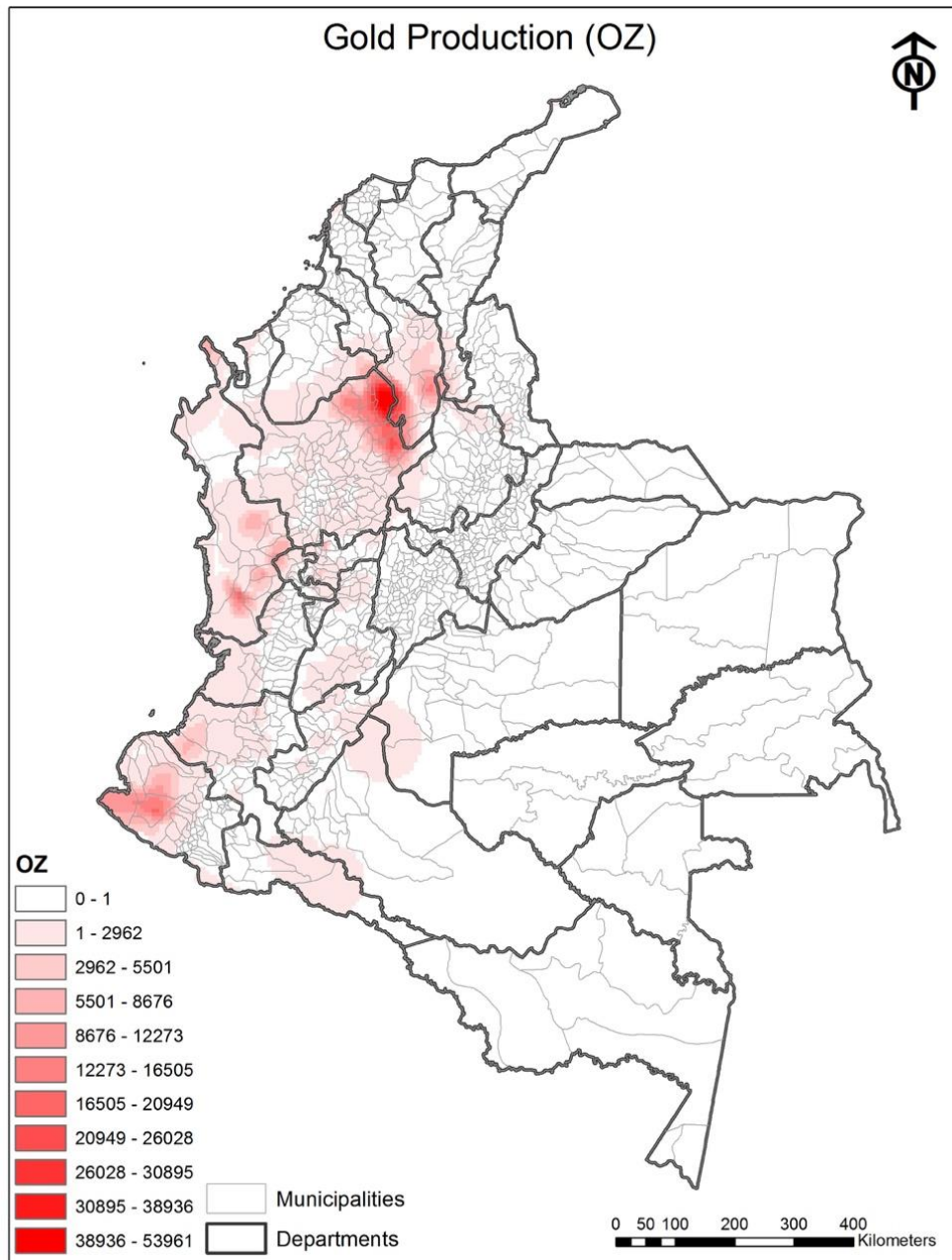
⁵ <https://www.datos.gov.co>

Figures 6: Coca Cultivation



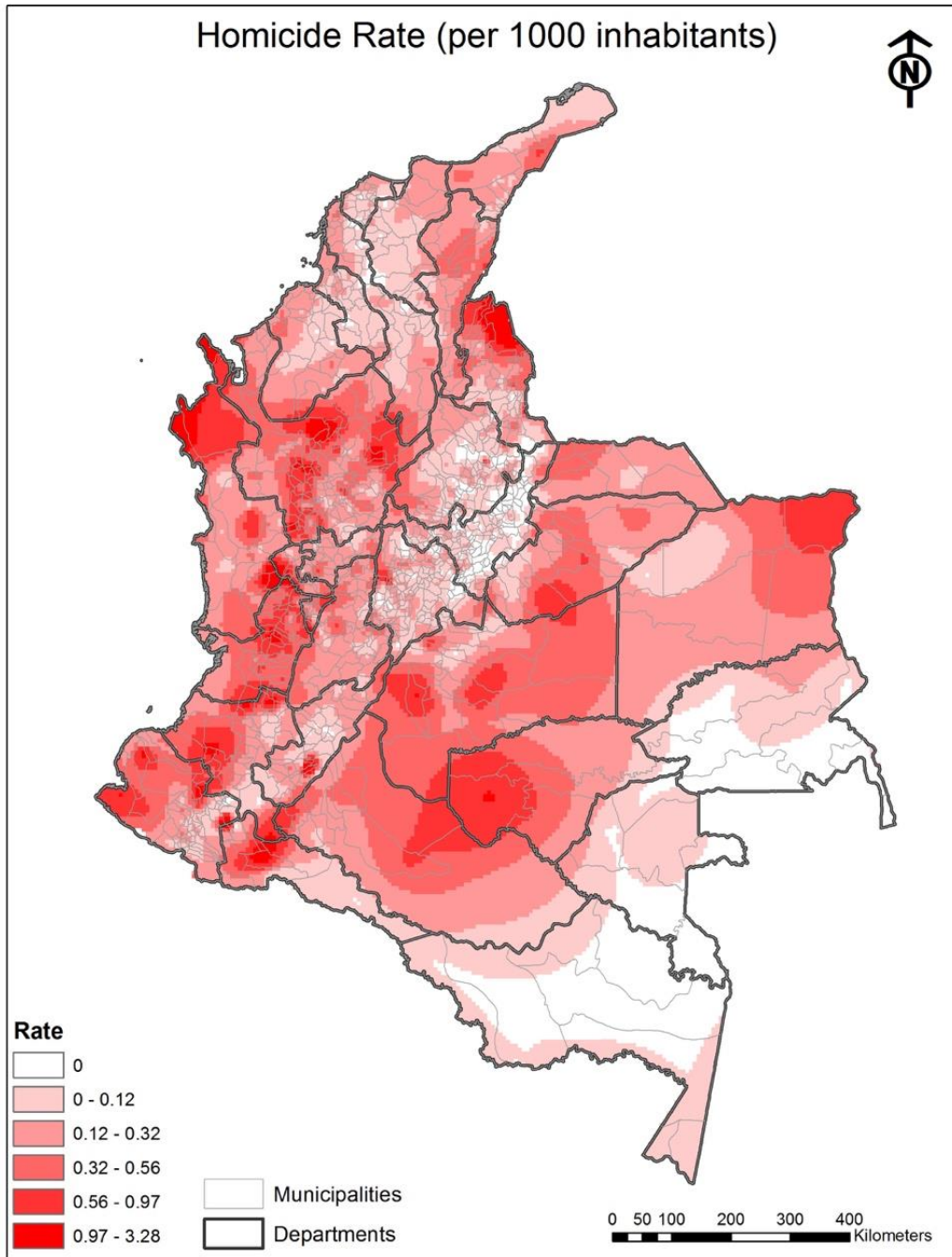
Map made by authors with data from the UNODC

Figure 7: Gold Production (Ounces)



Map made by authors with data from the Colombia Government

Figure 8: Homicide Rate by Municipality



Map made by authors with data from the Colombia Government

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
DVs					
Assassinations (Number)	1,122	0.34	1.31	0	26.00
Assassinations (Occurrence)	1,122	0.15		0	1
IVs and Controls					
Effective Number of Parties	1,122	3.70	1.08	1.12	7.31
Leftist Vote (%)	1,122	1.42	3.94	0.00	44.82
FARC presence	1,122	0.39		0	1
State Capacity	1,101	72.77	11.57	16.22	92.87
Conflicts (Mining)	1,121	0.28	0.68	0	6
% Change Coca Cultivation	1,122	33.94	181.79	-100.00	2871.52
Gold	1,121	355.95	2584.59	0.00	58819.45
Homicides (per 1000)	1,121	0.24	0.32	0.00	3.39
Bacrim presence	1,121	0.33		0	1
ELN presence	1,121	0.12		0	1
Population (Log)	1,121	9.58	1.16	5.97	15.90

5. Empirical Strategy

We provide an initial exploration of the relationship between political competition and the strength of leftist parties with the occurrence and incidence of violence against civic and social movement leaders. In this exploration we are interested in establishing if there is a relationship between these variables, but cannot yet determine if it a causal relationship. For our first dependent variable (the occurrence or not of violence against civic and social leaders) we use logistic regression since our dependent variable is a binary. For our second dependent variable,

the count of assassinations in every municipality, we use a negative binomial regression.⁶ To checks for the robustness of our results and, in particular, reduce the possibility that some observable covariates are both affecting the assignment to “treatment” (i.e. high electoral support for the left) and the value of the dependent variable (assassination of civic and social leaders), we used coarsened exact matching (Ho et al. 2007). In other words, we use matching to address the fact that municipalities can be systematically different across several (observed) characteristics and these can account for the differences in “assignment to treatment” and also in our outcome variables.

6. Results

6.1. Logistic Regression

The results of our logistic regression seen in Table 2 provide preliminary evidence supporting our hypothesis about a relationship between the nature of local political orders and competition with the probability of observing violence against social leaders in a municipality. As the fragmentation of the municipal party system increases (i.e. we observe a larger effective number of parties or ENP), the probability of an assassination against a social movement leader falls. As Figure 9 indicates, when the ENP is equal to one (and all other variables in the model are set to their sample mean), we have a probability of over 0.2 of observing at least one assassination. This probability falls to close to zero when the ENP is equal to 10. These results provide some indication that municipalities in which we observe a concentration of political competition in a few parties, we are also more likely to see violence against social and civic leaders.

⁶ We use a negative binomial instead of a poisson model because of the risk of overdispersion. This occurs when the sample variance is not equal to the sample mean and may result in smaller standard errors (Cameron and Trivedi 2009).

Table 2: Results Using a Logit Model

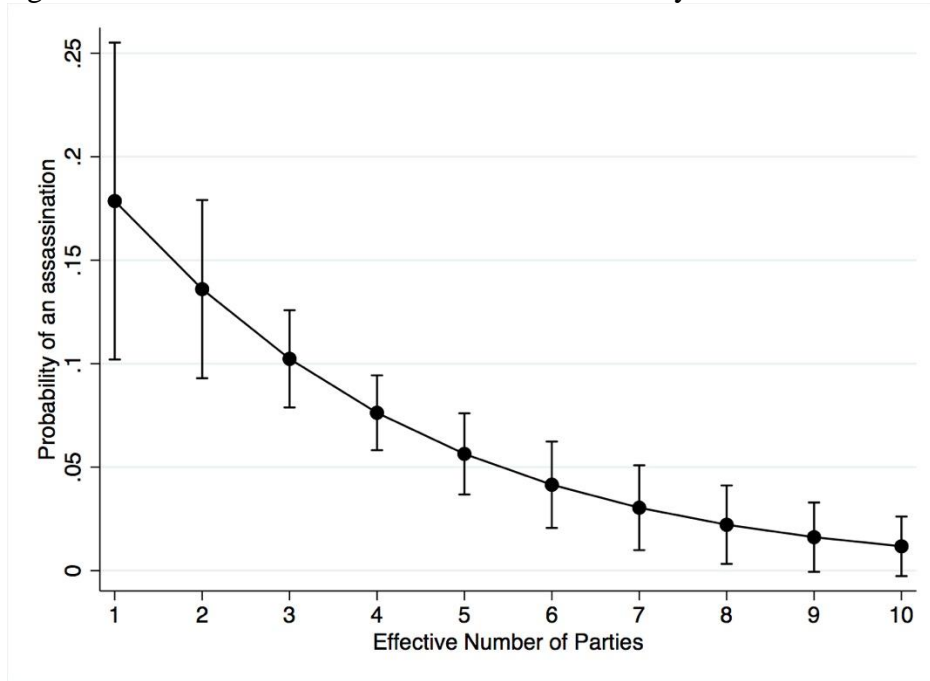
(1)

Effective Number of Parties	-0.323** (0.0950)
Left (%)	0.0578* (0.0225)
State Capacity	-0.0180* (0.00853)
Presence Bacrim	-0.189 (0.239)
Presence ELN	0.473 (0.273)
Presence FARC	0.477* (0.229)
Mining Conflicts	0.227* (0.115)
% Change Coca	0.000820* (0.000386)
Gold	2.35e-05 (2.44e-05)
Homicides (per 1,000)	1.562** (0.321)
Population (log)	1.100** (0.118)
Constant	-11.20** (1.064)
Observations	1,100

Robust standard errors in parentheses

** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Figure 9: Effective Number of Parties and Probability of an Assassination



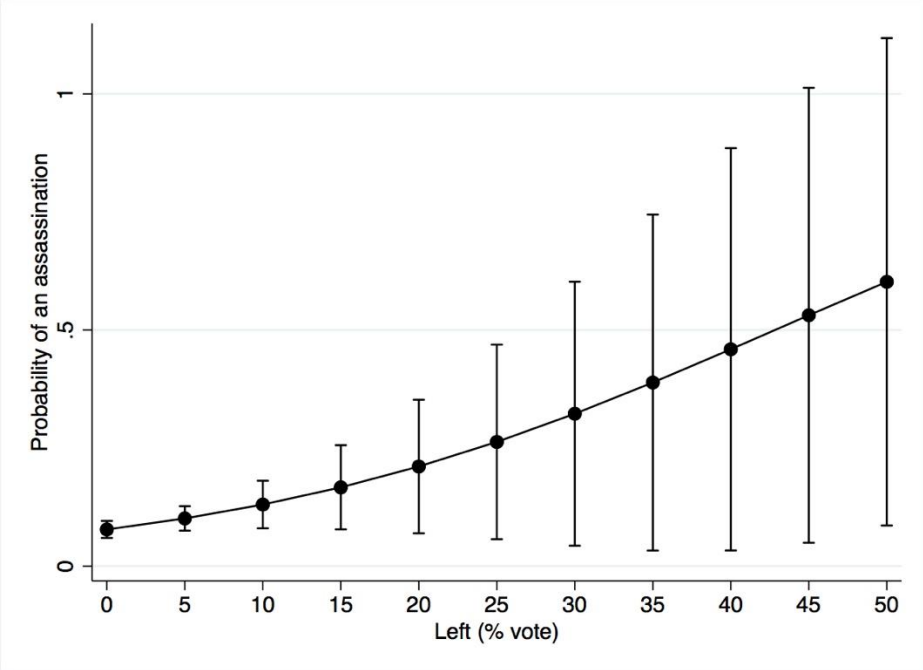
Also, as we hypothesized, the share of leftist vote in a municipality is positively associated with the probability of observing violence against civic and social leaders. When the share of leftist vote is negligible (as seen in Figure 10), we observe a low probability—or close to 0.1. As the share increases, so does the probability of observing violence. At a vote share of around 0.5, the probability of an assassination is close to 0.6.⁷ A larger leftist vote share is probably associated with stronger support of local social movements for these parties. These movements and parties, at the same time, challenge the local status quo and often face violence from local elites and armed actors.

Furthermore, we also find evidence that areas in which the FARC was present between 2010-2014 are also more likely to experience violence against social and civic leaders in the aftermath of their demobilization. As we discussed previously, these are likely to be

⁷ At higher shares of vote for leftist parties we also see bigger confidence intervals. This is likely the result of the low amount of observations for larger vote shares.

municipalities in which local political and social orders collapsed or are in flux. We expected to observe more violence in the context of these power vacuums and the struggles to establish new orders.

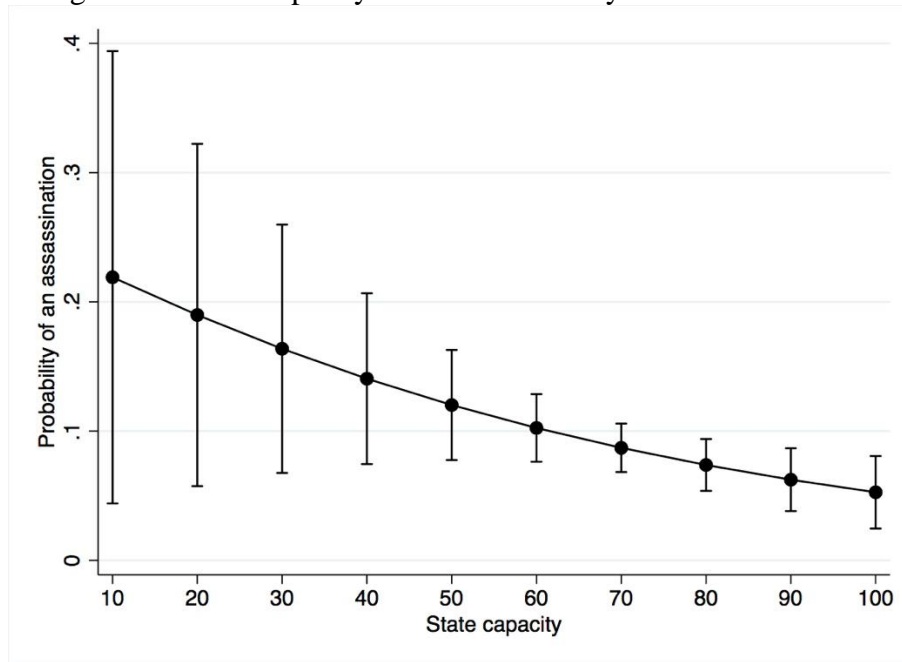
Figure 10: Share of Leftist Vote and the Probability of an Assassination



State capacity is negatively related with the probability of observing violence against civic and social leaders. As Figure 11 shows, higher values in the municipal performance measure are associated with lower probabilities of observing at least one assassination. However, the presence of non-state armed actors like the BACRIM and ELN are not significantly associated with greater violence.

Finally, we also find evidence linking growth in coca cultivation and a higher intensity of conflicts associated with mining to the assassination of social movement leaders. Higher levels of violent crime are also positively related with political violence against local movements.

Figure 11: State Capacity and the Probability of an Assassination



6.2. Negative Binomial Model

The results of our negative binomial regression seen in Table 3 provide further confirmation for our explanatory intuitions. As in the previous model, the effective number of parties is negatively associated with the intensity of violence against civic and social movement leaders. As shown in the Figure 12, as the ENP increases and all other variables are held constant at their sample means, the predicted count of assassinations decreases quite clearly. Moreover, like the previous logit model, the proportion of leftist vote share is also positively associated with assassination counts. A greater vote share for leftist parties is related to a higher count of assassinations of civic leaders, as seen in Figure 13. Figure 14 also illustrates the relationship between past FARC presence and violence today: territories with previous FARC presence are more likely to experience violence against social and civic leaders today than those who did not have FARC presence between 2010 and 2014. Finally, like in the logit model, higher state capacity is negatively associated with violence against social movement leaders.

Table 3

	(2)
	Negative Binomial
Effective Number of Parties	-0.318** (0.0757)
Left (%)	0.0712** (0.0238)
State Capacity	-0.0195** (0.00736)
Presence Bacrim	-0.0793 (0.219)
Presence ELN	0.168 (0.225)
Presence FARC	0.775** (0.214)
Mining Conflicts	0.169 (0.0934)
% Change Coca	0.000297 (0.000269)
Gold	3.22e-05* (1.34e-05)
Homicides (per 1,000)	1.718** (0.295)
Population (log)	0.852** (0.0880)
Constant	-8.576** (0.793)
Observations	1,100

Robust standard errors in parentheses

** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Surprisingly, variables measuring the impact of illicit economies (coca cultivation and gold production) the intensity of conflict related to mining and energy projects, or the presence of other non-state armed actors do not appear related with the intensity of social leaders' assassinations. The overall level of violent crime and populations size do remain associated with this form of political violence. Higher homicides rates and larger populations are statistically associated with higher numbers of associated leaders.

Figure 12: Effective Number of Parties and Predicted Assassination Count

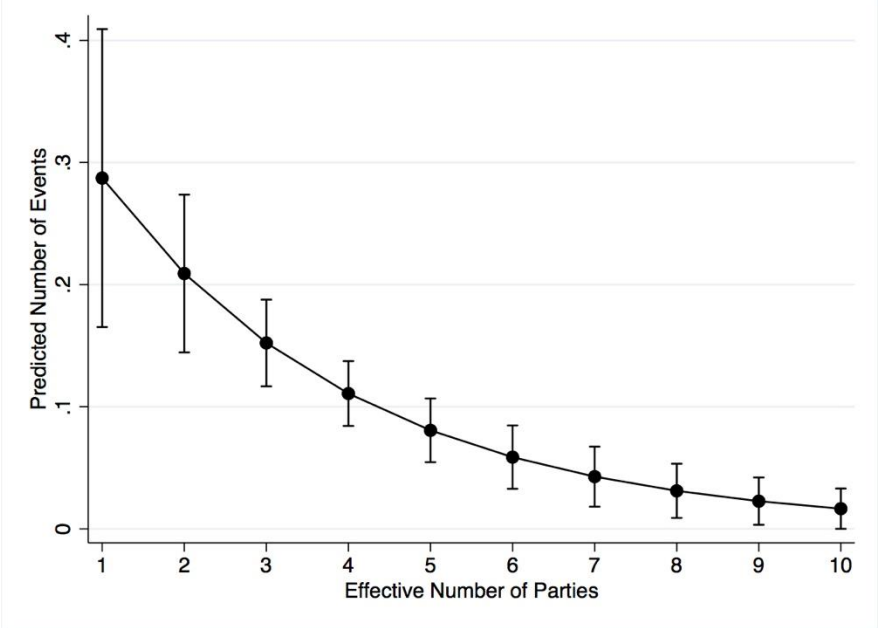


Figure 13: Share of Leftist Vote and Predicted Assassination Count

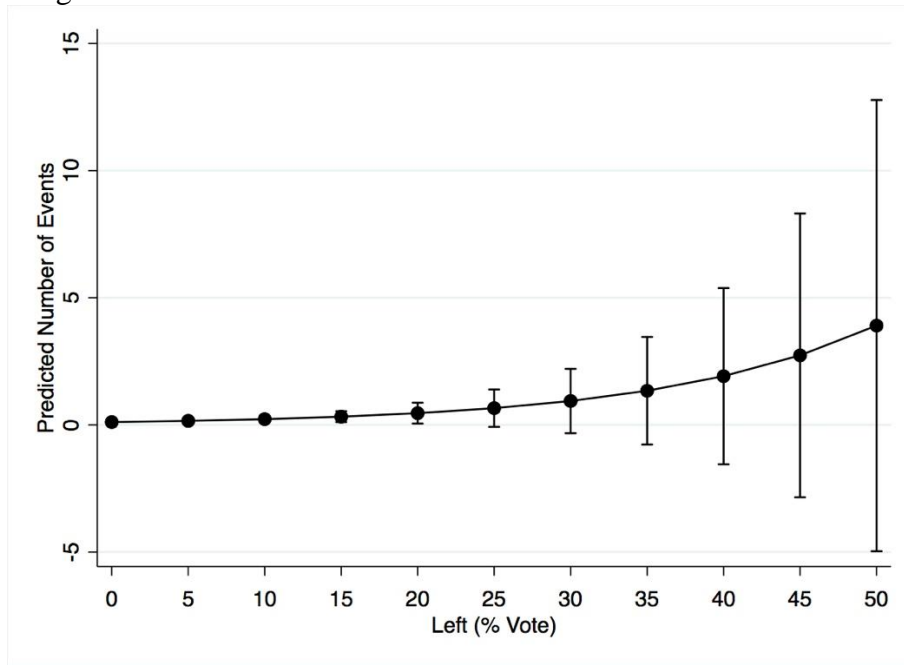
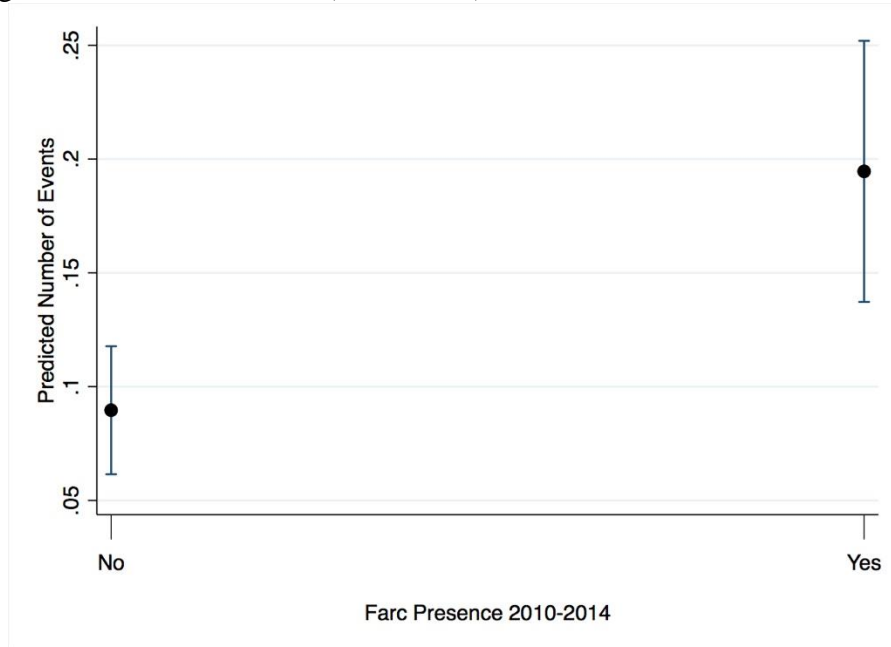


Figure 14: FARC Presence (2010-2014) and Predicted Assassination Count



6.3 Models with a Matched Sample

To address potential selection effects that could affect the estimation of our effects, we pre-processed our observations in our dataset using coarsened exact matching. In this way we sought to achieve greater balance in observed covariates between “treated” and “control” groups without having to rely on the assumptions of regression models (Ho et al. 2007). To determine the treatment and control groups we decided that all those municipalities whose percent of vote for the left was higher than the mean (i.e. greater than 1.42) were treated, while all others were in the control group. Selecting too many covariates to obtain the matched sample can create greater imbalances between treatment and control groups and in some cases led to the impossibility of obtaining any matched observations. To avoid this problem, we chose three important variables (effective number of parties, state capacity and homicide rate) to create the matched sample. As Table 4 shows, balance between treatment and control improves slightly with the matching procedure, particularly for the variables effective number of parties and state capacity. Both treatment and control groups are similar with regards to these variables. This can also be seen in the density plots available in Appendix A.

Table 4: Balance Statistics - Covariates

	Matched		Unmatched	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
Effective Number of Parties	3.81 (3.68 - 3.94)	3.7 (3.62 - 3.77)	3.83 (3.70- 3.96)	3.65 (3.57- 3.72)
State Capacity	75.24 (74.10-76.37)	74.736 (74.09- 75.38)	74.36 (73.15- 75.54)	72.23 (71.41-73.05)
Homicides	0.25 (0.22 -0.27)	0.16 (0.146- 0.174)	0.296 (0.26- 0.33)	0.216 (0.195- 0.24)

Running the analysis of the logistic and negative binomial regressions with the matched sample tends to corroborate the findings presented in previous sections, see table 5. Fragmented electoral competition is negatively associated with violence against social leaders, while higher percentages of electoral support for the left are positively related. FARC presence between 2010 and 2014 remains an important predictor of violence against social leaders in the count (negative binomial) model. Furthermore, state capacity is also negatively associated with violence in the count model.

Variables measuring the size of illicit economies or the presence of non-state armed actors are not significantly associated with violence in the models using the matched sample. However, in contrast to previous models, the intensity of gold production does show some relationship with the assassination of civic and social leaders.

Table 5: Results with a Matched Sample

	(1) Logit	(2) Negative Binomial
Effective Number of Parties	-0.401** (0.125)	-0.318** (0.0967)
Left (%)	0.0578* (0.0240)	0.0645** (0.0217)
State Capacity	-0.0202 (0.0130)	-0.0228* (0.0114)
Presence Bacrim	-0.354 (0.303)	-0.139 (0.229)
Presence ELN	0.313 (0.358)	0.278 (0.265)
Presence FARC	0.369 (0.282)	0.748** (0.241)
Mining Conflicts	0.119 (0.126)	0.160 (0.109)
% Change Coca	0.000620 (0.000407)	9.68e-05 (0.000226)
Gold	9.03e-05* (4.21e-05)	4.10e-05* (1.66e-05)
Homicides (per 1,000)	3.111** (0.582)	2.775** (0.359)
Population (log)	1.190** (0.151)	0.809** (0.0949)
Constant	-11.83** (1.465)	-8.087** (1.017)
Observations	932	932

7 Preliminary Conclusions

The assassination of civic and social leaders in post-conflict Colombia endangers the consolidation of peace in territories that have been the hardest hit by armed conflict. Moreover, it unfortunately continues a tragic tradition in Colombia at times of “peace” and of war in which human rights advocates and local social and civic leaders are disproportionately victimized. The high levels of violence against these activists observed in Colombia was unfortunately expected and there appears to be no reduction in sight.

In this paper we sought to go beyond traditional explanations of these violence that focus on the size of illicit economies and the presence of non-state armed groups by incorporating the nature of local political orders into our analysis. We argue that in Colombia’s post-conflict setting, local elites (from local politicians to criminal groups) use violence to sustain local—often authoritarian—political and social orders in the face of challenges by new political and civic actors. The assassination of civic and social leaders is not only about the control of illicit economies. It is also about the political and social control of Colombia’s rural and peripheral communities and perpetuates the historical “differential” process of state building in Colombia (Robinson 2013; González 2003).

Our empirical analysis using cross-sectional data of all Colombian municipalities with and without a matched sample provides preliminary support to our intuition. Municipalities that already have higher levels of political competition are also less likely to experience violence against their community leaders. At the same time, we are more likely to observe violence against social movement and civic leaders in municipalities in which the left is stronger electorally and thus poses a potential challenge to local elites. Violence is also more prevalent in areas in which the FARC was present before its demobilization. It is likely the power vacuum

left by this groups demobilization had led to power struggles in the periphery. Civic and social leaders are thus the victims of these disputes.

In the future, we seek to refine our quantitative analysis with qualitative analysis based on extensive fieldwork. We are interested in exploring in more detail the mechanisms through which the nature of local political competition is linked to the logic of violence against social and civic leaders. To do this, we are already engaging in extensive fieldwork —interviews, ethnography, among others— in Colombia’s pacific region to explore the links between changing patterns of electoral competition and violence against civic leaders in the cases of Buenaventura (Valle) and Tumaco (Nariño). With our research we not only hope to contribute to the growing scholarship being produced about this form of political violence in Colombia, but also make this systematic threat to democratic citizenship more visible.

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Appendix A

