

# Who Helps Stabilize? Political Elite Cues and Attitude Formation in Post-Conflict Contexts

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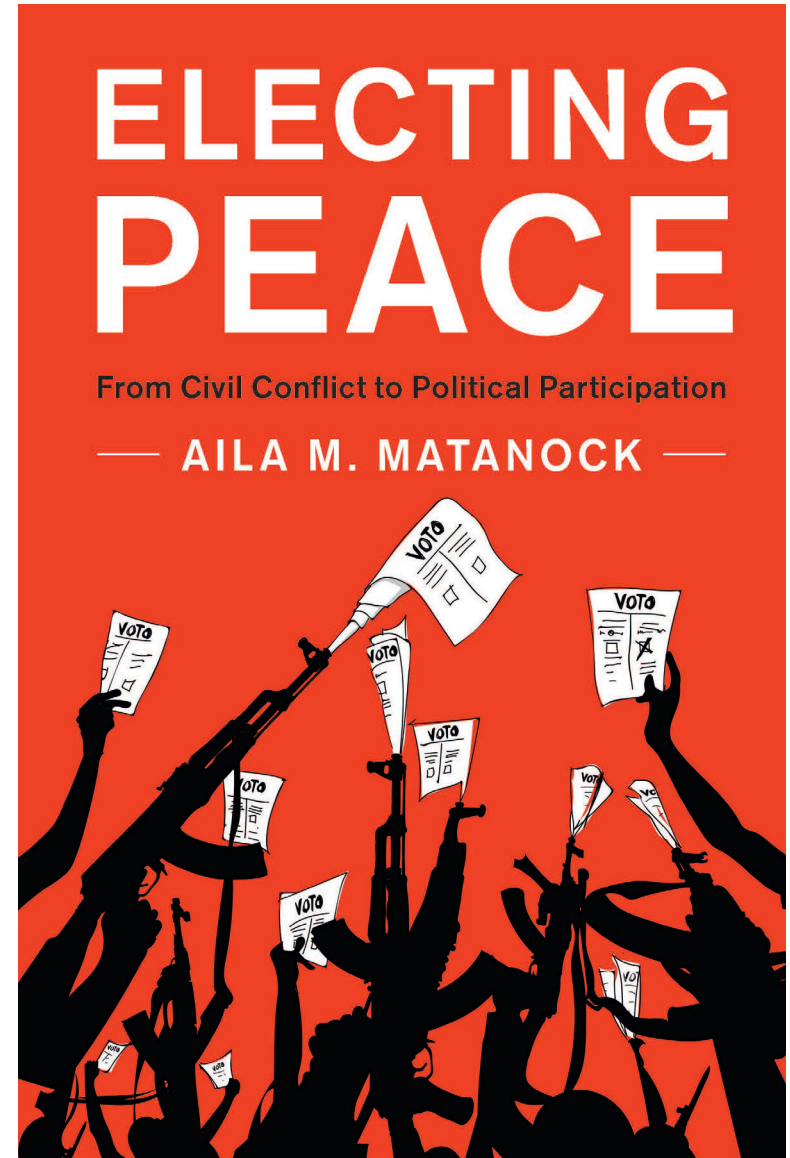
May 2022

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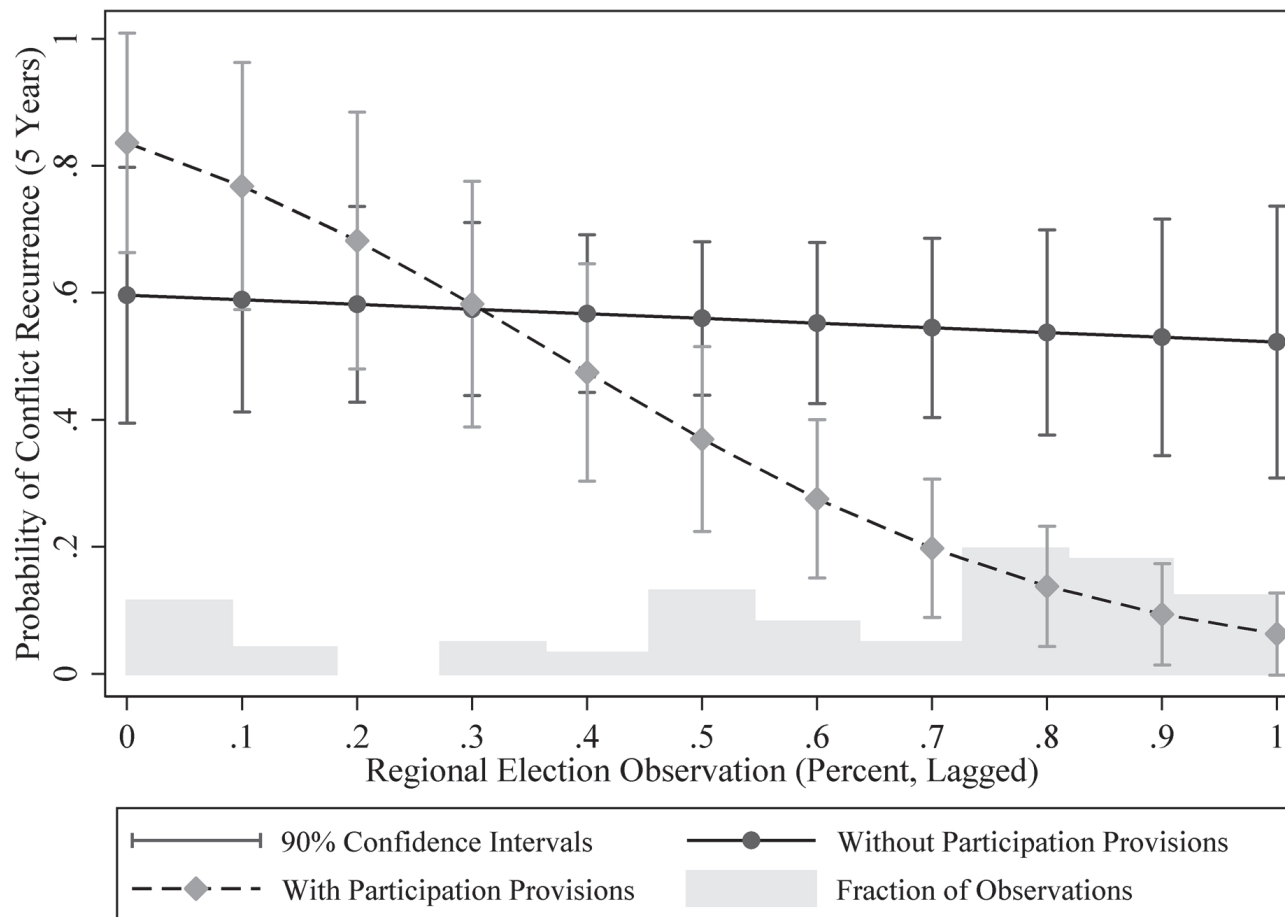
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- *These are typically elite deals, but, as citizens are increasingly engaged, could they play a similar role in securing peace?*

- *Electing Peace* argues that international actors can change combatants' incentives by rewarding compliance and punishing violations as they become political parties.
- It tests international engagement with ex-combatant parties by analyzing:
  - Cross-national data (1975-2010)
  - Case studies drawing on archival data and elite interviews



# Expectations of external engagement alongside combatant parties are associated with more stability.



UN Photo/J Bleibtreu

**Figure 1:** Conflict recurrence – with and without electoral provisions and expectations of external engagement. *Source:* Matanock 2017.

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- These are typically elite deals, but, as citizens are increasingly engaged, could they play a similar role in securing peace?
  - **How do citizens form attitudes toward peace processes and their provisions for policy change?**

# Outline

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Theory: Citizens Use Political Elites' Cues

Research Design: Survey Experiment in Colombia

Results on Attitude Formation

Political Elite Cues and Affinity

How Do Elite Cues Work?

Conclusion: Citizen's Attitudes in Peace Processes Do *Not* Suggest They Play the Same Stabilizing Role as International Actors



## Citizens increasingly play a role in peace processes.



*Source: El Tiempo*

- Citizens vote in referendums (relatively rare), vote on negotiating politicians (common), and shape implementation (always).
- The implementation process features commitment problems — including civil society and citizens may improve implementation (Nilsson 2012).

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  - The implementation process features commitment problems — including civil society and citizens may improve implementation (Nilsson 2012).
- How do citizens think and act, and does their influence help stabilize? How do citizens form attitudes on peace processes and their provisions for policy change?

# How do citizens form attitudes toward peace processes and their provisions for policy change?

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- We do not know much about how citizens form their attitudes.
  - A widespread theory about support for settlements focuses on exposure to violence with inconclusive evidence (e.g., Rettberg et al. 2008; Weintraub et al. 2015; Branton et al. 2019; Kreiman and Masullo 2020; Hazlett and Parente 2020).
  - Some studies focus on which individuals are likely to support peace processes (e.g. Hayes and McAllister 2001, others on victimization).
- Growing experimental work begins to tackle non-structural predictors of support for particular provisions, such how the type of violence committed by rebels shapes support for transitional justice policies (Fabbe et al. 2019; Tellez 2019; Haas and Khadka 2020; Kao and Revkin 2020), especially during negotiations.

# Most work hypothesizes that peace processes are unique settings with different dynamics from other political processes.

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- Two prevalent models:
    - War-weary citizens support any valid peace process, collectively observing and rewarding compliance with implementation by combatant parties (mechanism for “self-enforcing” agreements).
    - Spoiling citizens oppose any compromise, amplifying elite divisions (mechanism for undermining agreements).
  - Most other models also inherently suggest that citizens have strong incentives to sort through information on its merit.
- *We argue, instead, that citizens rely on heuristics and follow political camps in their attitudes on the process.*

# What is the environment in which citizens form their attitudes?

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- Acquiring information is costly, and many citizens are uninformed even on important issues and use shortcuts (Tversky and Kahneman 1974; Sniderman et al. 1993; etc.), especially when decisions are complex and when they must put cognitive effort elsewhere.
- In peace processes:
  - Complex policies are negotiated by elites considering trade-offs and tying together policies into a settlement accepted by those at table.
  - Implications are not always immediately applicable to citizens' lives.
- In post-conflict contexts:
  - Cognitive effort is often elsewhere due to fighting and rebuilding.

# Elite cues serve as a useful cognitive shortcut in these contexts.

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- Elites representing political camps – *political elites* - supply clear cues due to their starkly split positions.
    - Post-conflict contexts are characterized by warring parties but also factions taking dovish or hawkish approaches to negotiations.
- *H1: Citizens will rely on political elites' cues to form their opinion about provisions emerging from settlements.*

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- Among the factions, citizens tend to take sides, and their affinity with political camp directs the effect of cues on attitudes.
- *H2: A cue from a political figure will increase support for that policy when a citizen has affinity for that elite, and vice versa.*

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- *H2: A cue from a political figure will increase support for that policy when a citizen has affinity for that elite, and vice versa.*
- Messages are likely to shape citizens' attitudes by either:
  - Priming affect toward elites is transferred to the provision, or
  - Providing new information used to update beliefs on the provision.



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# Survey experiment examines attitudes during the ongoing implementation of a peace agreement in Colombia.

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- Peace process seeking to end more than five decades of conflict with FARC rebels:
  - 2012-2016: Negotiations and signed agreement.
  - 2016 (October): Voters narrowly reject plebiscite on the agreement.
  - 2016 (December): Slightly revised agreement passes Congress.
  - Now: Implementation has been underway, but slow, especially after opponents elected in 2018 elections.
- Negotiations were led by President Santos, but with significant opposition from his predecessor, the charismatic Uribe.
- The settlement is complex (300 pages) and being passed piecemeal but faces significant opposition.

## Our Colombia survey:

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- Face-to-face surveys October 2017 through January 2018.
- Surveyed 1,391 subjects in 35 municipalities in 8 departments (out of 32 total departments in the country)
  - Representative of regions most exposed to conflict (sampling frame: 170 municipalities where the government is running development plans, PDETs, as part of the settlement)
- We partnered with IPSOS to conduct the survey, and with the Observatorio de la Democracia at Universidad de los Andes to coordinate and supervise its implementation, working with funders.
- We presented two provisions from the process and randomized realistic endorsements from the leaders of the dovish and hawkish political camps.

## Experimental design:

Each individual was presented with two provisions emerging from the peace process (with elite cues with no deception):

- Creation of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP); randomized endorsement by Santos.
- Change in the eligibility to compete for new political representation in conflict areas (Special Seats); randomized endorsement by Uribe.

Both proposals were under ongoing discussion in Congress but most citizens knew very little about them.

<b>JEP vignette</b>	No.	Cell %	<b>Special Seats vignette</b>	No.	Cell %
No cue	478	51.7	No cue	439	48.3
Santos cue	447	48.3	Uribe cue	470	51.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>100.0</b>

- We also asked about and blocked on individuals' pre-treatment affinity (favorable image) with the politicians. Blocks

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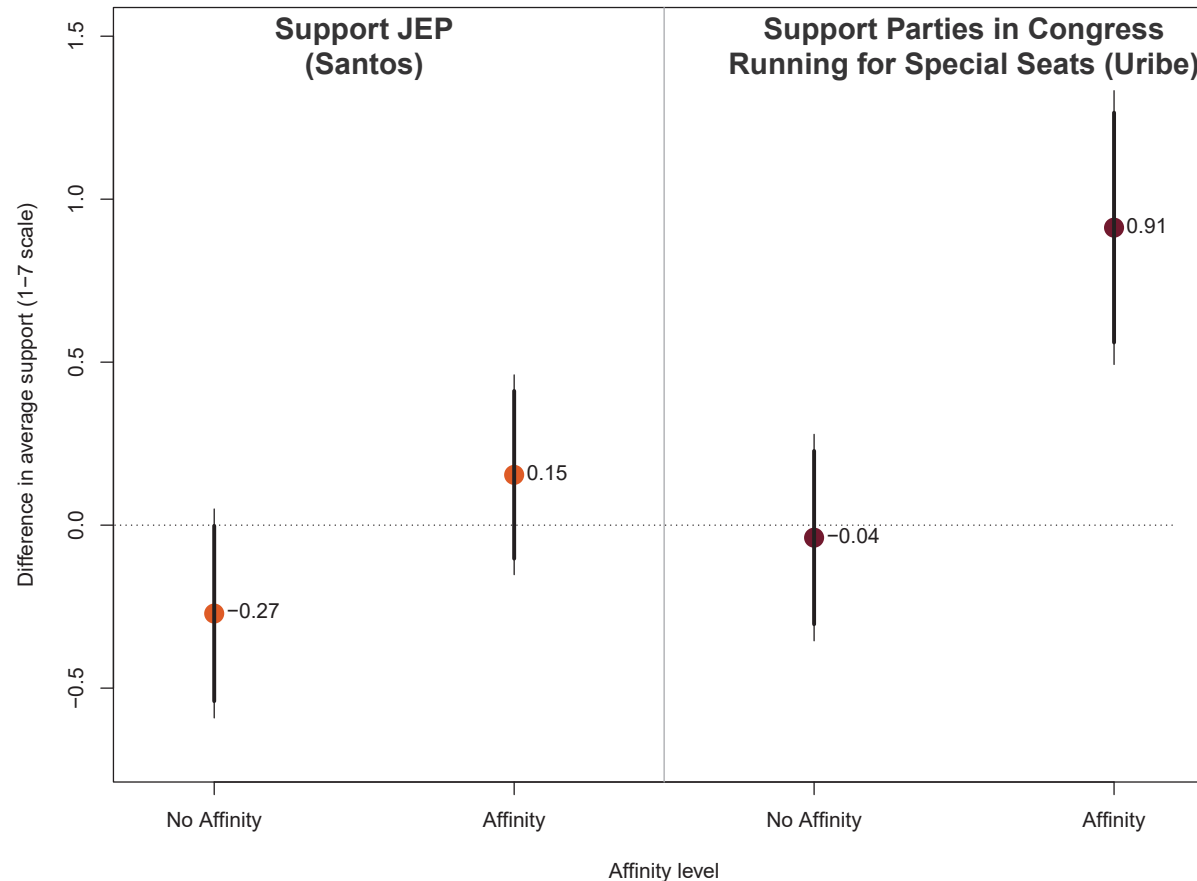
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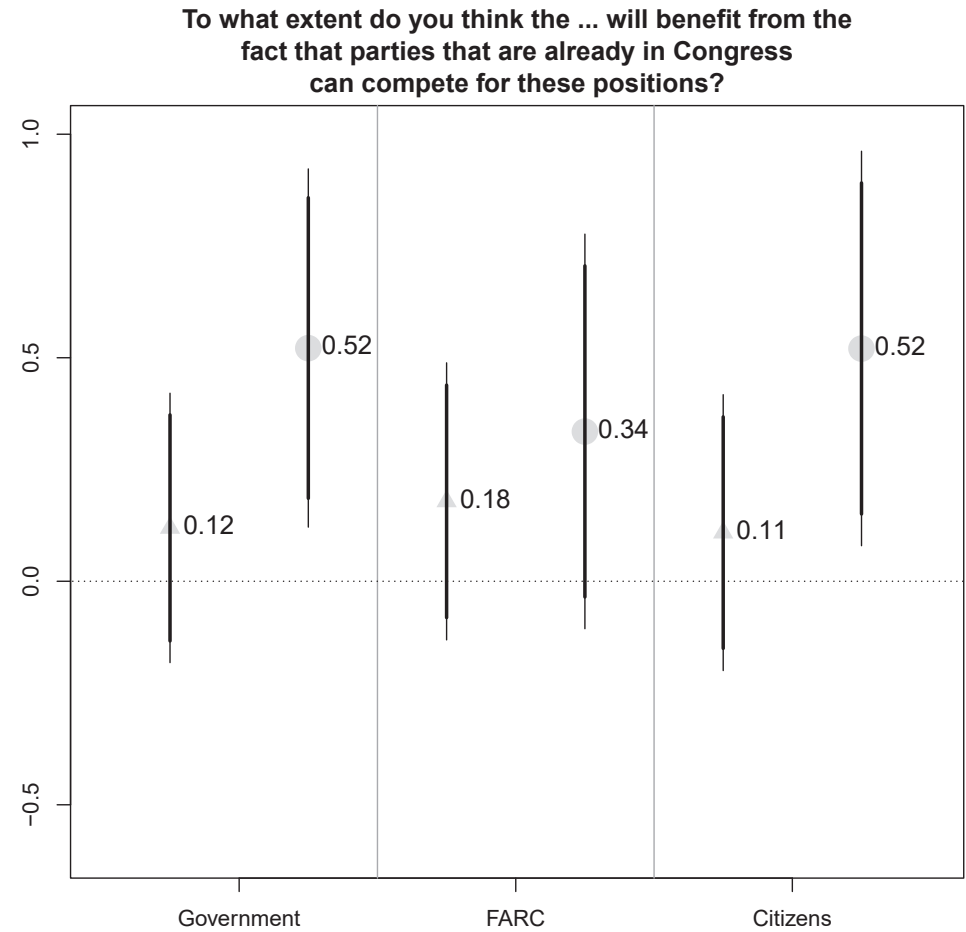
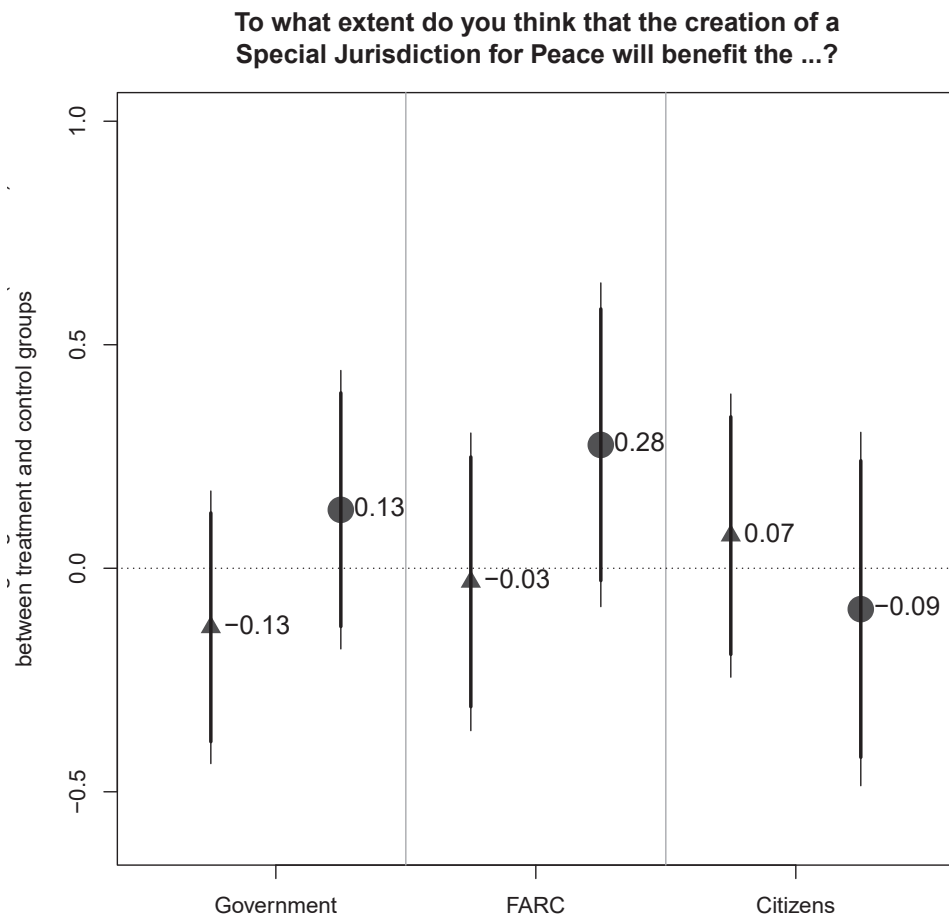
# Political elite cues shape attitudes towards provisions; their effect depends on citizens' affinity with the endorser.



*Note:* Thick and thin lines correspond to 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively. In both vignettes, the difference of the estimated effect for low and high affinity are statistically significant.

# How do elite cues work?

→ Political cues as affect heuristics more than as sources of new information.



▲ No affinity ● Affinity

## Extensions:

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- We explore differences in these political elites: Uribe's cue is more persuasive (also stronger and more robust) and potentially works differently, which we explain through his relationship to his camp and the information from his cue.
- We examine additional information experimentally, and it does not affect support, nor does it significantly attenuate the cues.
- We also explore cues from technical elites, and we do not find the same effects, and the political elites' cues are also robust to these.



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# Implications:

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- Our results show that citizens use political elite cues, shaped by their affinity, and use other information less.
- Our work suggests citizens may not typically *self enforce* or *spoil* settlements — instead, they likely *ratify* elite deals or divisions.
- We should not count on citizens to stabilize implementation by overcoming classic commitment problems.

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- Our results show that citizens use political elite cues, shaped by their affinity, and use other information less.
- Our work suggests citizens may not typically *self enforce* or *spoil* settlements — instead, they likely *ratify* elite deals or divisions.
- We should not count on citizens to stabilize implementation by overcoming classic commitment problems.
- My *Electing Peace* book broadly suggests that overcoming commitment problems may require international actors to stabilize this dimension of peace.

Comments most appreciated ([matanock@berkeley.edu](mailto:matanock@berkeley.edu)).

Thank you!