**Paper title:** Reelection Backfire: How Reelection Concerns Affect Public Security Policy in Mexico

**Abstract**

This paper studies how reelection incentives influence the responsiveness of local politicians to local as opposed to national security demands. For many public goods, local and national preferences are often aligned and so are politicians’ responses – e.g., reducing poverty. But when it comes to fighting crime the preferences of local citizens may diverge from those of the national government: local governments must often respond to local demands to fight ordinary crime -such as theft and property damage-, while national governments often prioritize fighting organized crime. Since fighting organized crime often demands resources from and the participation of local governments, this may crowd out important resources in the fight against ordinary local crime. However, while focusing on local security might increase local electoral responsiveness it may lead to decreasing transfers from the national government. Using Mexico's fight against organized crime as an example, the paper studies the effect of local electoral accountability on cooperation with upper-level governments by analyzing the impact of an electoral reform that introduced mayoral reelection from 2014 to 2022. The results show that mayors facing reelection tend to prioritize local needs, leading to a decrease in security cooperation agreements with governors and the national government. As a result, security transfers from the national government decrease, as well as their anti-narcotic activities. An asymmetric effect on crime follows: ordinary theft and property crimes decrease, while organized crime-related homicides increase. This paper suggests that electoral incentives shape security policies against organized criminal groups.

**Bio**

Rafael Ch is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Princeton University’s Empirical Studies of Conflict Project (ESOC) and an Economics of Conflicts Fellow at the International Crisis Group. He received his Ph.D. in Politics from the Department of Politics at New York University (NYU). His research interests lie in comparative politics and research methods and include the study of conflict and state capture of local governments by non-state armed groups. He has a regional specialization in developing countries, particularly Latin America. His research has been supported by organizations such as the Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and the Development Bank of Latin America – CAF. His work has been published in the American Political Science Review, the Journal of Development Economics, and the Journal of Urban Economics. During his postdoctoral fellowship, he developed a new agenda on the effect of climate shocks on criminal governance in climate-distressed populations.