

**1 December 2016**

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*'Vigilante Mobilization and Local Order: Evidence from Mexico'* (with Javier Osorio, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY and Michael Weintraub, Binghamton University and Universidad de los Andes)

**Abstract:**

Why do some communities engage in armed mobilization in response to disorder and insecurity, while others do not? Can these communities improve local order in the absence of a strong and impartial state? We study the sources of self-defense mobilization (autodefensas) in Mexico and how these groups affect contemporary levels of crime. We argue that historical experiences of armed mobilization can have long-lasting effects on local preferences and institutions, which can facilitate armed collective action and the provision of local order in contexts of rampant insecurity. Our empirical approach traces the sources of recent self-defense groups to the early twentieth century Cristero rebellion and, using an instrumental variables approach, we show that contemporary community mobilization has succeeded in reducing a broad range of crimes.