

JUAN FELIPE RIAÑO

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VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS ◊ UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA Vancouver, BC, Canada
— Ph.D. in Economics 2022 (*expected*)
Committee: FRANCESCO TREBBI (CHAIR), SIWAN ANDERSON, MATILDE BOMBARDINI, PATRICK FRANCOIS

UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES Bogotá, DC, Colombia
— M.A in Economics 2013
— B.A in Economics 2011
— B.Sc in Industrial Engineering 2014

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Applied Microeconomics, Political Economy, Development Economics, and Economic History

PUBLICATIONS

- “[Political Competition and State Capacity: Evidence from a land allocation program in Mexico](#)”
(with Leopoldo Fergusson and Horacio Larreguy), January 2022,
The Economic Journal, Conditionally Accepted, Oxford University Press
- “[Conflict Educational Attainment and Structural Transformation: ‘La Violencia’ en Colombia](#)”
(with Leopoldo Fergusson and Ana María Ibáñez), October 2020,
Economic Development and Cultural Change, 69(1), 335-371. The University of Chicago Press
- “[Consumers as VAT ‘Evaders’: Incidence, Social Bias, and Correlates in Colombia](#)”
(with Leopoldo Fergusson and Carlos Molina), Spring 2019,
Economía Journal, 19(2), 21-67. Brookings Institution Press
- “[I Sell My Vote, and So What? Incidence, Social Bias, and Correlates of Clientelism in Colombia](#)”
(with Leopoldo Fergusson and Carlos Molina), Fall 2018,
Economía Journal, 19(1), 181-218, Brookings Institution Press

WORKING PAPERS

“[Bureaucratic Nepotism](#)”
(Job Market Paper)

Bureaucratic Nepotism is one of the most chronic and hard-to-identify pathologies within public administrations worldwide. Yet, the lack of comprehensive data and suitable empirical settings have limited its understanding in modern bureaucracies. This paper studies the *extent, functioning and consequences* of bureaucratic nepotism within public sector organizations. By linking confidential information on bureaucrat’s family ties and administrative employer-employee records on the *universe* of civil servants in Colombia (2011-2017), I present three sets of empirical findings. First, I undercover the pervasiveness of family connections within the public administration and document how the prevalence of close family ties is negatively related to the performance of bureaucrats and public sector agencies. Second, I demonstrate that family connections to top-level managers and advisors significantly distort the promotion and compensation of civil servants. However, consistent with the extraction of private rents instead of better screening of workers via family networks, I find that family-connected promotees are negatively selected in terms of experience, education, and performance. Finally, I evaluate the 2015 anti-nepotism legislation reform in Colombia. I determine the limited effectiveness of this reform and show how bureaucrats strategically responded to this policy change by substituting margins of favoritism and reshuffling within the public administration. Taken together, these findings provide the first systematic empirical examination of bureaucratic nepotism and anti-nepotism legislation in an entire modern bureaucracy.

“Collateral Damage: The Legacy of the secret war in Laos”

(with Felipe Valencia-Caicedo) Revisions Requested at *The Economic Journal*

As part of its Cold War counterinsurgency operations in Southeast Asia, the US government conducted a “Secret War” in Laos from 1964-1973. This war constituted one of the most intense bombing campaigns in human history. As a result, Laos is now severely contaminated with UXO (Unexploded Ordnance) and remains one of the poorest countries in the world. In this paper, we document the negative long-term impact of conflict on Laotian economic development, using highly disaggregated and newly available grid-cell data on bombing campaigns, satellite imagery, and development outcomes. We find that bombings have a negative, significant and economically meaningful impact on nighttime lights, expenditures and poverty rates. Almost 50 years after the conflict officially ended, bombed regions are poorer and growing at slower rates than unbombed areas. A one standard deviation increase in the total pounds of bombs dropped is associated with a 33% decrease in nightlights. To tackle the potential endogeneity of bombing, we use as instruments the distance to the Vietnamese Ho Chi Minh Trail as well as to US military airbases outside Laos established before the conflict started. Using census data at the village and individual levels, we show the deleterious impact of bombing and UXOs in terms of health, education, structural transformation, and rural-urban migration.

“Media, Secret Ballot and the Process of Democratization in the United States”

(with Leopoldo Fergusson and BK Song) Submitted at *The Journal of Public Economics*

Can the media determine the success or failure of institutional reforms? We study the adoption of secret voting in the US and the role of media in this arguably crucial step to improve democracy. Using a difference-in-difference identification strategy and a rich dataset on local newspapers, we find that areas with high levels of media penetration exhibited multiple improvements in democratization outcomes following the adoption of the electoral reform. Specifically, the press contributed to the decrease in partisan attachment and support for dominant parties. It undermined the unintended consequence of the manipulation of electoral boundaries and the fall in turnout. We consider multiple concerns about our identification strategy and address the potential endogeneity of newspapers using an instrumental variable approach that exploits the introduction of wood-pulp paper technology, and woodland coverage at the county level in 1880. Exploring the heterogeneous effects of our results, we argue that the media mattered through the distribution of information to voters, and the increase of public awareness about political misconduct.

“Social Dissent, Coercive Capacity, and Redistribution: Evidence from Authoritarian Mexico”

(with Horacio Larreguy and Mariano Sánchez Talanquer)

The extent to which authoritarian regimes use coercive, relative to redistributive, strategies to manage social dissent exhibit significant variation across the territory they govern. We argue that the incidence of different authoritarian tactics to deal with dissent depends on the coercive capacity of the state, which autocrats often inherit from the past. Where autocrats facing increasing discontent can rely on their capacity to coerce regime dissidents, they are more likely to eschew redistributive strategies. In contrast, dissent increases the likelihood of redistribution where autocrats lack readily-available tools for coercion. We provide empirical support for this argument primarily using a difference-in-differences identification strategy that exploits three sources of variation. First, we use a land reform that between 1910 and 1992 redistributed more than 50% of Mexico’s agricultural land. Second, we exploit a wave of dissent around the 1960s. Finally, we use municipal data on the availability of loyal semi-formal militias to coerce dissidents. Our results indicate that, when confronted with dissent, the PRI regime redistributed relatively less land in municipalities with more rural militia presence. We also show that, in those municipalities, events expressing social discontent were more successfully deterred. The study sheds light on how state coercive capacity shapes authoritarian strategies.

WORK IN PROGRESS

“The Friedman Hypothesis”

(with Marianne Bertrand, Matilde Bombardini, Raymond Fisman, and Francesco Trebbi)

“Low Entrepreneurial Intent: A Legacy of South Africa’s Mining Monopsony”

(with Neil Lloyd)

“Systematic Discrimination and Police Shootings in the US”

(with Thorsten Rogall)

REFEREEING EXPERIENCE

ECONOMICS

— *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Canadian Journal of Economics*, *Economía Journal*, *The Manchester School*

POLITICAL SCIENCE

— *American Political Science Review*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, Vancouver School of Economics
– Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant *2017 – Today*
— *Professors Francesco Trebbi, Siwan Anderson, and Felipe Valencia.*
- CENTER OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (CEDE), Universidad de los Andes
– Young Researcher and Research Assistant *2011 – 2015*
— *Professor Leopoldo Fergusson*
- ENGINEERING RESEARCH CENTER (CIFI), Universidad de los Andes
– Research Assistant, Faculty of Engineering *2011 – 2012*
— *Professor Natalia Santamaria*
- MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PUBLIC CREDIT, The Republic of Colombia *2010*
– Intern, General Directorate of Public Credit and National Treasury - Department of Risk

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA Vancouver, BC, Canada
— Political Economy, Institutions, and Business, *Graduate Level* *2019, 2020*
— Economic Development, and Business, *Graduate Level* *2019*
— Methods of Empirical Research in Economics, *Undergraduate Level* *2016, 2017, 2018*
— Introduction to Empirical Economics, *Undergraduate Level* *2016, 2017, 2018*
- UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES Bogotá, DC, Colombia
— Empirical Applications in Political Economy, *Graduate Level* *2013, 2014*
— Advanced Macroeconomics Business Cycles, *Graduate Level* *2012, 2013*
— Engineering Economics, *Graduate Level* *2011, 2012*
— Game Theory, *Graduate Level* *2010, 2011*
— Java Programming, *Graduate Level* *2009, 2010*
— Mathematical Methods for Economists, *Graduate Level* *2008, 2009*

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

- Annual Meeting of the Canadian Economics Association, Vancouver, Canada *June-2021*
- 25th Society for Institutional & Organizational Economics, Boston, MA, USA *June-2021*
- 16th CIREQ Ph.D. Students' Conference, Montreal, Canada *May-2021*
- World Bank Seminar: Bureaucracy Lab Meeting, Washington, DC, USA *May-2021*
- World Bank Seminar: UXOs in Fragile and Conflict States, Washington, DC, USA *December-2020*
- Political Economy Workshop RIDGE and LACEA, Lima, Peru *December-2020*
- 24th Society for Institutional & Organizational Economics, Boston, MA, USA *June-2020*
- Ronald Coase Institute Workshop on Institutional Analysis, Warsaw, Poland *May-2019*
- NYUAD Historical Political Economy Conference, Abu Dhabi, UAE *March-2019*
- 19th Latin American Meeting of the Econometric Society, São Paulo, Brazil *November-2014*
- 4th Congress of Colombian Economy, Bogotá, Colombia *September-2014*
- 14th Jan Tinbergen European Peace Science Conference, The Hague, Netherlands *June-2014*

HONORS AND AWARDS

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA	Vancouver, BC, Canada
– Academic Achievement Award (Faculty of Arts Graduate Award)	2020
– President’s Academic Excellence Initiative PhD Award	2020
– Doctoral Fellowship (Four Year Fellowship)	2015 – 2019
– International Tuition Award	2015 – 2021
UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES	Bogotá, DC, Colombia
– Scholarship for Masters in Economics	2011 – 2013
– Scholarship for Undergraduates (Beca ‘Quiero Estudiar’)	2007 – 2013

GRANTS

CENTRE FOR INNOVATIVE DATA IN ECONOMICS (CIDE)	Vancouver, BC, Canada
– Grant in Innovative Data (\$14,000), Project: The Political Economy of Corporate Voting	2021
– Grant in Innovative Data (\$6,000), Project: Collateral Damage: The Secret War in Laos	2019
– Grant in Innovative Data (\$15,000), Project: Bureaucratic Nepotism	2018
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SECURITY AND DRUGS (CESED)	Bogotá, DC, Colombia
– Grant (\$5,000), Project: Conflict, Education, and Structural Transformation	2011 – 2013
CENTER OF AMERICAN STUDIES (CEE)	Bogotá, DC, Colombia
– Thesis Grant (\$2,500), Project: US Aid and Political Agenda-Setting	2011 – 2012

SKILLS

QUANTITATIVE AND PROGRAMMING	Stata, MATLAB, R, Julia, Python, Java, C/C++, Bash
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS	ArcGIS, QGIS, GDAL
LANGUAGES	Spanish (native), English (fluent), French (basic)

REFERENCES

PROFESSOR FRANCESCO TREBBI (SUPERVISOR) Haas School of Business University of California Berkeley 2220 Piedmont Ave, Berkeley, CA 94720 ftrebbi@berkeley.edu	PROFESSOR SIWAN ANDERSON Vancouver School of Economics University of British Columbia 6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1L4 siwan.anderson@ubc.ca
PROFESSOR MATILDE BOMBARDINI Haas School of Business University of California Berkeley 2220 Piedmont Ave, Berkeley, CA 94720 mbombardini@haas.berkeley.edu	PROFESSOR PATRICK FRANCOIS Vancouver School of Economics University of British Columbia 6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1L4 patrick.francois@ubc.ca
PROFESSOR CLAUDIO FERRAZ Vancouver School of Economics University of British Columbia 6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1L4 claudio.ferraz@ubc.ca	PROFESSOR FELIPE VALENCIA CAICEDO Vancouver School of Economics University of British Columbia 6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1L4 felipe.valencia@ubc.ca