

What Makes a Good Public Servant? Criminal Exposure and Performance in Office

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Abstract

We plan to examine how the expansion of illegal industries affects politician quality and the provision of public goods in Peru. We exploit childhood exposure to illegal markets as an exogenous shock that affected the criminal capital of potential politicians. While most of the literature has focused on how legal commodity booms affect political and economic outcomes, very little is known about the role of illegal markets. We have access to a dataset containing confidential administrative data on the criminal records of politicians (which is not self-reported) and we are combining this with information on the education, exact place of birth, date of birth, and employment records for the universe of politicians in Peru, comprising more than over 100,000 individuals. These data will allow us to examine how illegal labor markets affect political corruption and provision on public goods, as well as other outcomes, potentially shedding light on the development of narco-states.

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