

MARÍA BALLESTEROS

CONTACT INFORMATION	Watson School of International and Public Affairs Brown University 111 Thayer Street, Providence, RI 02912	maria_ballesteros@brown.edu www.mariaballesteros.com
ACADEMIC POSITIONS	Rhodes Geopolitics Postdoctoral Research Associate Watson School of International and Public Affairs, Brown University	2026–Present
EDUCATION	Harvard University Ph.D., Political Science A.M., Political Science Dissertation: <i>Essays on the Political Economy of Territorial Control During Conflict</i> Senator Charles Sumner Dissertation Prize Excellence in General Examinations Committee: Jeffry Frieden (co-chair), Pia Raffler (co-chair), Gary King, Christoph Mikulaschek Affiliate, Institute for Quantitative Social Science and Weatherhead Center for International Affairs ITAM B.A., Political Science, with honors Honors Thesis: <i>Indiscriminate Violence, Civilian Preferences and Insurgent Strategy: Evidence from Afghanistan</i> Supervisors: Austin L. Wright (Harris School of Public Policy), Jeffrey Weldon, Alberto Simpser	2026 2022
PUBLICATIONS	2025. Ballesteros, María, Cynthia Dwork, Gary King, Conlan Olson, and Manish Raghavan. “Evaluating the Impacts of Swapping on the US Decennial Census” <i>CS & Law</i> .	
UNDER REVIEW	Ballesteros, María, Christopher W. Blair, Igor Kolesnikov, and Austin L. Wright. “Territorial Control in Civil Wars” R&R at <i>World Politics</i> .	
WORKING PAPERS AND WORKS IN PROGRESS	“Displacement as State-Building: Mobile Phone Evidence from the Taliban’s Return to Power” “Ripe for Entry: How Export Certification Leads Cartels to Replace Local Gangs and Reduce Violence” Ballesteros, María, Christopher W. Blair, and Austin L. Wright. “Securing Property Rights as a Tool for Equitable Peace-Building: Evidence from Colombia’s Land Tenure Formalization and Restitution Efforts” “The Politics of Cartel Competition: Evidence from the Mexican Drug War” “Mobile Phone Data Reveals the Immediate Effects of Civil War Termination on Migration Decisions: An Examination of the Taliban’s Victory”	
POLICY PAPERS AND REPORTS	2024. Ballesteros, María and Andrew O’Donohue. “There’s a Better Way for Mexico	

to Elect its Judges” *Foreign Policy*.

Interviewed for *The New York Times*

AWARDS AND
FELLOWSHIPS

- 2026 Senator Charles Sumner Prize for the best dissertation dealing with means or measures tending toward the prevention of war and the establishment of universal peace, Harvard University
- 2024–25 Minerva/Peace Scholar Fellowship, U.S. Institute of Peace & U.S. Department of Defense (\$20,000)
- 2023 Empirical Implications of Theoretical Modeling Fellowship, Princeton University
- 2022 Research Award in Race, Ethnicity, Migration and Politics, Harvard University
- 2020–26 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Prize Fellowship, Harvard University
- 2020 Honorable Mention, Premio de Investigación ExITAM (Best Undergraduate Thesis in Political Science)
- 2017–18 Junior Faculty Award, ITAM (awarded to top undergraduate students in the department)
- 2015 National Best Speaker, Mexican Universities Debate Championship
- 2015 Panamerican Second Best Speaker, Panamerican Universities Debate Championship, Montego Bay, Jamaica
- 2014 National Champion and World Runner-Up, International Public Speaking Competition, London, United Kingdom

GRANTS

- 2022 Weatherhead Center Mid-Dissertation Grant, Harvard University (\$3,500)
- 2021–23 IQSS Summer Research Grant, Harvard University (\$1,950; \$2,400; \$2,950)
- 2021 LATAM Regional Hub Small Grants Fund, EGAP (\$13,800), with Christopher W. Blair and Austin L. Wright

TEACHING

Instructor, Barriers to Peace: Organized Violence as an Obstacle to Development, Undergraduate Course, Harvard University, Spring 2026

Teaching Fellow, Comparative Politics of Latin America, Undergraduate Course, Harvard University, 2023 & 2024 (Steven Levitsky)

Undergraduate Thesis Advisor, Harvard University, 2022–2024

Instructor, Math Prefresher for Ph.D. students, Graduate Course, Harvard University, 2023 (with Sooahn Shin)

Teaching Fellow, International Political Economy, Undergraduate Course, Harvard University, 2023 (Jeffrey Frieden)

Teaching Fellow, Quantitative Analysis and Empirical Methods, Graduate Course, Harvard Kennedy School, 2022 (Maya Sen)

Teaching Fellow and Guest Lecturer, Diplomacy and International Relations, Undergraduate Course, Harvard University, 2022 (Naima Green-Riley)

Head Teaching Fellow, Quantitative Analysis for Public Policy, Graduate Course, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago, 2019 (Thomas Coleman, Austin L. Wright)

TRAINING AND CERTIFICATES	2026	AI Fluency: Framework & Foundations, Anthropic
	2022	GIS Institute, Harvard Center for Geographic Analysis
	2018	Data and Public Policy, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago
	2017	Macroeconomics and Fiscal Legislation, UNAM
	2016	Chinese Government and Politics, Hong Kong Baptist University
SKILLS	Software: R, Python, Stata, L ^A T _E X, ArcGIS, QGIS	
	Agentic coding: Claude Code, Codex	
	Languages: Fully bilingual in English and Spanish	
	Citizenship: USA, Mexico, Spain	
OTHER RESEARCH AND POLICY EXPERIENCE	Research Assistant to Luis Martinez and Maria Angelica Bautista, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago 2020	
	Full-Time Research Assistant to Austin L. Wright and Konstantin Sonin, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago 2019–2020	
	Junior Policy Analyst, IRStrat Consulting, Mexico City 2018	
	Junior Communications Analyst, Cuantrix, Televisa Foundation, Mexico City 2017–2018	
CONFERENCES AND INVITED TALKS	2025	APSA Annual Meeting, Vancouver, Canada
	2025	Political Violence Workshop, Harvard Kennedy School
	2024	Political Violence Workshop, Harvard Kennedy School
	2024	USIP-Minerva Peace Scholars Convening, U.S. Institute of Peace & U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, DC
	2023	Empirical Implications of Theoretical Modeling (EITM) Institute, Princeton University
SERVICE	2022–23	Graduate Student Association Co-President, Harvard Government Department
	2020–21	PSprep Advisor: helping students from underrepresented backgrounds apply to Ph.D. programs