**Title:** REELECTION BACKFIRE: POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND SECURITY UNDER-PROVISION IN MEXICO

**Abstract:** Accountability theories suggest that removing term limits increase public good provision through the strengthening of local politicians-citizens accountability ties. What happens, however, if the accountability between voters and political parties, in charge of politicians’ careers, changes? What principal (voter or party) wins the heart and mind of the agent (politician)? In this paper, I analyze an electoral reform in 2014 in Mexico that allowed mayors to be reelected for 2 consecutive periods at most and was rolled out in a step-wedge way until 2022. Using a cohort weighted event-study design, I find the reform leads to an under-provision of public security, the most relevant public good demand in the country in the last decade given the prevalence of drug-trafficking related crime. As a result, violence increased throughout the country. This result is not explained by candidate adverse selection, citizens' security preferences nor captured incumbents by drug trafficking organizations. Through an event study-in-discontinuity of close elections design, I find the effect is mediated by an increase in incumbency advantage of the dominant party on hold of the central government. The survival advantage results in a decrease in the level of effort to pursue crime and promotes shirking from local party-executives who decrease the number of criminal detentions. Moreover, the incumbent party used his electoral advantage to reduce security provision in the municipalities he ruled, while he targeted opposition municipalities: a “not in my backyard” strategy made the opposition bear the costs and externalities of the War on Drugs in Mexico. Overall, these results suggest that voter accountability may fail to yield welfare benefits when accountability with the party in charge of the central government is weak. Moreover, under reelection, parties' strong capacity to oversight its members may lead voters to create an incumbency advantage; however, an incumbency advantage decreases the willingness of parties to do so (a possible “accountability paradox”).