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Why voters do not throw the rascals out?— A conceptual framework for analysing electoral punishment of corruption

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Abstract One of the intriguing phenomena in democracy is the fact that politicians involved in, accused of or condemned for corruption in a court of law get re-elected by their constituents. In some cases, corruption does not seem to negatively affect the development of political careers. In this introductory article, we try to develop a multidimensional framework for analysing electoral punishment of corruption. First, we will look into various studies on electoral punishment and highlight their advancements and shortcomings. Then, we will propose a more dynamic account of electoral punishment of corruption that takes into account individual as well as macro level explanations. Finally, we will disaggregate these two analytical dimensions into various explanatory factors.

The problem

In theory, democracies are organised through a set of rules and institutional mechanisms that limit the spread of corruption to critical levels, among others: universal, free and fair elections; freedom of expression; political pluralism; electoral competition; alternation in power; a series of counter-weights and constitutional guarantees; independent media; an impartial administration; and an informed and demanding citizenry. In practice, despite all these mechanisms, corruption continues to occur in democracies with devastating consequences for their stability and legitimacy.

Although good laws and good institutions are quintessential to the fight against corruption [119], they seem to be insufficient to reverse its resilient effects in a society. Countries have stockpiled a series of anti-corruption laws and mechanisms,

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engaged in several administrative and judicial reforms, and yet, in many instances, the results promised by their designers have not been yielded. The prevalence of corruption in a given society not only depends on the quality of its legal and institutional frameworks but also on the civic culture of its citizens. Fighting corruption is not only about improving good governance's *hardware* (laws, processes and institutions) but also its *software* (public ethics and expectations), by 'transforming political culture in the widest sense' ([71]: 83).

In democracies, apart from criminal liability, elected politicians are also bound by a concept of political responsibility, central to the contract of representation between voters and those elected to represent them. Given the incapacity or proved difficulty of the judiciary to condemn politicians for serious abuse of office, the possibility to punish corrupt behaviour at the ballot box becomes the ultimate sanction to make politicians responsible for their misdeeds and to restore a minimal concept of legality in politics. In principle, democratic elections provide incentives for integrity by making politicians accountable for their policies as well as their conduct in office [11, 39, 64, 99, 139]. In practice, however, electoral punishment of political corruption is hardly a reality in many democracies. It is, therefore, important to understand why this type of vertical accountability takes place in certain democratic contexts and not in others.

One of the intriguing phenomena in democracy is the fact that politicians involved in, accused of or condemned for corruption in a court of law get re-elected by their constituents. In some cases, corruption does not seem to negatively affect the development of political careers. On the contrary, it may actually help to consolidate them by enabling office holders to extract sufficient illegal rents to mobilise clientelistic support that helps them to perpetuate in office. If democracy is based on the belief that the "best" or "most fitted" politicians get elected through a pluralist competitive process, then it is important to understand what is the impact of corruption in voters' preferences, in other words, to what extent voters value ethical standards when assessing the "qualities" of the candidates and why they prefer to support corrupt candidates.

We have decided to focus on most similar cases to try to understand the dynamics of micro- and macro-variables affecting voters' behaviours and predispositions to sanction the corrupt conduct of their candidates at the ballot box. Southern European democracies offer an interesting ground to test these explanatory variables, not only because they display common contextual features (high levels of public debt in percentage of GDP due to both ill-informed as well as clientelistic and corrupt public spending decisions, mismanagement of public funds and resources, economically biased political decisions, partitocracy and recurrent political patronage in the public sector, bureaucracies with poor accountability and transparency, inconsistent penal frameworks and inefficient judicial institutions, unclear regulations, weak civic action, etc.) but because corruption has systematically been perceived as more widespread than in its northern European counterparts. All four countries have seen their position in the Corruption Perceptions Index decline systematically over the past decade, but whereas the Iberian democracies are still above the waterline in the EU27 scale, Italy and especially Greece have plunged to unprecedented low scores. These democracies have been consolidated for more than three decades (longer in the case of Italy) and yet democratic values have not been harmoniously diffused to all its

territory or appropriated by citizens. Clientelism and political corruption are ripe, and the dividing line between public and private is murky. The current conjuncture is particularly interesting to test hypotheses on the electoral punishment of corruption. Due to the economic adjustment policies and austerity measures these countries are going through, corruption has become a highly sensitive issue in the public arena and political debate. The mixture "austerity + corruption" is highly corrosive to democratic legitimacy: while disillusioned citizens are frequently engaging in street protest and increasingly displaying anti-party, anti-elite and anti-system voting preferences; conventional parties are desperately trying to find manageable government solutions, through grand coalition arrangements and technocratic cabinet formations that try to keep at bay both extreme-right parties and populist movements riding the anticorruption ticket.

In this introductory article, we try to develop a multidimensional framework for analysing electoral punishment of corruption. First, we will look into various studies on electoral punishment and highlight their advancements and shortcomings. Then, we will propose a more dynamic account of electoral punishment of corruption that takes into account individual- as well as macro-level explanations. Finally, we will disaggregate these two analytical dimensions into various explanatory factors.

The debate so far

Tolerance of corruption is not only a matter of developing democracies. Presidents, Ministers, MPs and Mayors across the word get re-elected or continue their political career without any problems thanks to the support of voters, despite having been denounced or condemned for corruption. The paradox 'unpopular corruption and popular corrupt politicians' ([71]: 63) can be found in advanced democracies as well as developing ones. As Chang et al. [25] were able to demonstrate, 'voters in all the industrial democracies' for which they had relevant information 'appear surprisingly tolerant of illegal behavior on the part of elected political representatives'.

Various scholars aimed to quantify electoral punishment of corruption and warned that no effective condemnation exists. In Brazil, Renno [113] finds that voters' concern about corruption had little impact on voting behaviour in the Presidential Election of 2006. Winters and Weitz-Shapiro [141] analyse why Lula's popularity was not damaged by the corruption scandals that occurred within his administration and suggest that lack of information rather than informed trade-off explains the voters' support for corrupt politicians in the country. Rivero and Fernández-Vázquez ([116]: 36) claim that in Spain parties whose mayors were involved in corruption have not been penalised at the ballot box. Peters and Welch [100] and Welch and Hibbing [140] point out that candidates to the US House of Representatives charged with corruption do not suffer an electorally strong social condemnation, and are likely to be re-elected. Between 1968 and 1990, more than 60 % of incumbents in this condition got re-elected. Reed [109] finds that both in the United States and Japan legislators indicted or convicted for corruption are able to continue their political careers and continue enjoying the support of their electorate. The author remarks that 62 % of Japanese legislators convicted of corruption between 1947 and 1993 were subsequently re-elected. Similar data can be found for the cases of Spain ([59]) and

France [72]. Chang et al. ([25]: 5) have analysed data on social tolerance to corruption in Italy during 11 legislatures. They demonstrate that 'charges of malfeasance make no statistically significant difference in the likelihood that a deputy will be listed as a candidate in the subsequent election'. Klasnja [64] and Golden [49, 50] agree about the failure of electoral punishment of corruption, and emphasise that corrupt politicians in mature democracies lose only between 5 and a little over 10 % of the vote over long stretches of time, and that a modal corrupt politician is successfully re-elected despite public charges or substantial allegations of corruption.

These studies not only demonstrate that electoral punishment in most instances fails to materialise, they also challenge some basic tenets of democratic theory ([71]: 63). One of the fundamental principles that is challenged is democratic accountability. The belief that democracy is 'a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives' ([123]: 76) might still have some meaning for bread and butter issues associated with economic voting, but does not hold true with regard to electoral punishment of corruption. The reward–punishment idea, imbedded in the social contract tradition of John Locke, John S. Mill, the Federalists and others, not only requires an institutional framework that enables representative government, based on freedom of choice, pluralism and an effective system of checks and balances, but also a citizenry which is sufficiently motivated, informed and competent to intervene in the public sphere by ratifying policy options and delegating power to those entrusted to rule through universal, fair and competitive elections and 'a relatively high degree of control over leaders' ([28]: 3). With regard to misconduct in office, these tenets seem not to work. Most of the time, corrupt candidates have succeeded to defy justice and existing checks-and-balances with great success and still get re-elected. Justice fails to materialise, thus damaging democratic legitimacy. Citizens fail to punish corruption at the ballot box for a variety of reasons, either because they do not have sufficient information about the corruption allegations raised against their candidate or do not display the necessary motivation and capacity to make use of such information even when it is available. As Schumpeter pointed out, 'Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them' ([124]: 269); having the opportunity to throw the rascals out does not necessarily mean that such capacity will be exerted. Even if it is a complex issue, judging economic performance is more straightforward for average citizens than judging the moral conduct of politicians. Corruption is foremost a social construction, a product of perceptions. and, for that reason. it can be many things to many people. People talk a lot about corruption without necessarily agreeing upon its meaning. Without a consensus on what corruption means, accountability is difficult if not impossible to judge. Corruption has become one of the most sensitive issues in election campaigns in democracy along with more traditional themes such as the performance of the economy, welfare policies, etc. Given citizens' limited willingness and capacity to process such complex information about politics, reward and punishment may be less clear-cut than is argued by the rational voter theory ([2]: 276–281). Voters' perception of the evilness of corruption does not necessarily match their daily practices and attitudes. Although voters are likely to condemn corruption in abstract, in strategic terms they are predominantly tolerant in so far as it benefits them (or their friends and relatives),

solves their problems or improves their quality of life in general. This utilitarian or myopic evaluation of public integrity results in a trade-off of values at the ballot box in favour of the individual's interests to the detriment of the public good; accountability and legality are exchanged by efficiency and effectiveness. Even if citizens had no motivations to be insensible about corruption, had no significant cognitive limitations to make sense of the available information, and had access to plural and unbiased information about the moral conduct of candidates, their own prejudices, priorities, interests and values would still interfere with the relationship between actual facts and judgements. In order to overcome these inconsistencies in their voting preferences, voters often take shortcuts and avoid having to make responsible evaluations about the moral conduct of their candidate by standing to their parties' choices right or wrong or dismissing integrity as a voting issue altogether. Not surprisingly, the lack of electoral punishment of corruption seems to remain constant across several elections.

There are, however, a lesser number of articles that seem to corroborate a negative electoral impact of corruption allegations [18, 89, 112]. Slomczynski and Shabad [129] argue that perceiving a party to be corrupt makes voters less likely to vote for that party. According to De Sousa [31], the hastening of attitudes towards financial impropriety in political life is product of a "feel good factor" decline caused by major shifts in the political economy and their perceived negative impact on daily economic life of citizens. Shifts in the models of political economy have a serious impact on public expectations from elective and public office. Once the dominating model of political economy enters into crisis, citizens' expectations grow from the values and benefits previously heralded by the declining model. Conversely, once the model of political economy is at its peak level, citizens tend to relate to the proclaimed values and languish in the prosperity and wellbeing conveyed to them. Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga [143] positively test this thesis by demonstrating that voters punish corrupt politicians in adverse economic contexts. Other authors [40, 38] put more emphasis on the reliability of information about a candidate's integrity: when voters have trustworthy information about corruption scandals, they are more likely to punish electorally the politicians involved in them. Andreas Bågenholm, in this special issue, takes a more systemic approach: what makes corruption a voting issue is not so much the reliability of information, but how the political actors make use of such information to defeat their opponents. Bågenholm suggests that corruption has negative electoral consequences when it is politicised and political parties take advantage of the anti-corruption rhetoric during the campaign. The author warns that parties that accuse their opponents of being corrupt are much more successful than parties that focus on more traditional policy issues, under control for the position of the party (incumbent or in opposition) and for the actual level of corruption in the country. He also argues that governments tend to fall more frequently when corruption charges are made against them, again under control for the level of corruption in the country. Other authors take a more sceptical approach: under certain conditions, politicians facing corrupt allegations during elections might see their share of the vote reduced, but not to the extent of losing an election ([59]: 194; [33, 36, 140]). Chang et al. [24], in their chronological study of general elections in Italy, point out that, historically, charges of malfeasance are insufficient to curtail the probability of re-election. However, over time, this situation changed. In the Eleventh legislature

(1992–1994), changes in the traditional voting patterns occurred and, the authors argue, were determined by the 'massive exogenous shocks to the political system' caused by the Clean Hands (*Mani pulite*) investigations. The unveiling of the systemic corrupt practices associated to the financing of Italian political parties and candidates' illicit enrichment not only resulted in a generalised punishment of corruption but it also triggered the collapse of the Italian post-war party system. Although in this special issue we are only concerned with the direct consequences of corruption upon a candidate's chance of being (re)elected, there is a new set of studies that looks at indirect forms of political punishment that are not related with voting, for instance, the reduction in transfers of federal funds—for public works—to corrupt local municipalities ([16]: 2). In this case, democratic accountability is not assessed solely in terms of voters' electoral punishment but also in terms of peer-to-peer or centre–periphery political punishment. It is not the electorate who punishes corrupt candidates, but the government of the day. When central authorities use corruption as a yardstick for the allocation of public funds, voters' support for a corrupt local candidate declines, Brollo argues ([16]: 3), because they fear that this situation may cause a reduction in financial transfers.

A multidimensional approach

Electoral punishment of corruption has been studied through a variety of perspectives, focusing on different explanatory variables and using diverse methodologies to test them. Single country analyses—US [33, 121], UK [36], Japan [110], Italy [24], Spain [116]—still dominate this emerging area of studies, but comparative studies (over time and across countries) have increased in recent years [13], due to a more systematic collection and treatment of electoral data and the inclusion of corruption in post-election surveys.

Traditionally, studies on electoral punishment defined large sets of conditions under which corruption could be expected to have electoral consequences by looking at the dynamics of political scandals [60] or the performance of representative institutions [40, 81]. Although there is widespread agreement that certain economic contexts, political cultures and institutional features are likely to constrain electoral punishment of corruption, we are still short of understanding what is the mechanism behind this lack of electoral consequences. More recently, individual-level explanations have become popular through the use of surveys and to test voters' attitudes towards corruption during elections [25, 24, 70, 97, 102]. However, most of these studies offer a static analysis of electoral punishment by looking at a particular election in a given country [59]. What is missing is a more dynamic account of electoral punishment of corruption that takes into account individual- as well as macro-level explanations. This is precisely what we propose in this special issue.

Voters' behaviour is influenced by both micro- and macro-level factors, and this is not different when it comes to transforming judgements on a candidate's integrity into electoral punishment. On the one hand, micro-level factors are related to the personal/identity features of individuals and with their desires and cultural framework. On the other hand, the society's dominant normative structure and institutional setting in which the scandal takes place, the characteristics of the corruption charges,

Table 1 A multidimensional approach to electoral punishment of corruption

Factors	Indicators	Features	
Micro	Predispositions	Features of the individual that might condition his/her willingness to punish/reward corruption at the ballot	Education Job situation Profesional background Socio-economic status Gender Age Social Trust
	Attitudes	Reasons for punish or not corrupt candidates	Corrupt but efficient All corrupt Rumours/noise My candidate right or wrong Benefiting for corruption Integrity does not matter
Macro	System-based conditions	Features of the political system that might condition the capacity to punish corrupt behaviour at the ballot box	Party system Electoral system Nature of parties
	Enviroment-based conditions	Contextual conditions that might \facilitate or constrain the capacity to punish corrupt behaviour at the ballot box	Economic context Dominant political culture Overall quality of state institutions Independence of the judiciary Independence of the media

and who is accused with them, as well as the political context that surrounds it, have been found to mediate the electoral consequences of corruption. Whereas environment- and system-based conditions are equal to all voters, their impact upon voters' judgements is varied. Voters' are more or less permeable to these factors depending on their individual features, motivations, desires, etc. Predispositions and attitudes towards corruption vary considerable from one individual to another hence there are not homogeneous effects of corruption on voter's behaviour.

Micro- and macro-level factors can be grouped in two sets of indicators or conditions formed by a set of variables (see Table 1). These various factors are intertwined, creating a set of opportunities, constraints and incentives through which voters hold their representatives accountable. These causal mechanisms do not always affect harmoniously a citizen's decision to reward/punish corruption at the ballot box.

Macro-level factors

Macro-level factors can be divided into system-based or environment-based conditions: whereas the first designate the features of the political system that might condition the capacity to punish corrupt behaviour at the ballot box, such as the nature of the party and electoral system or the existence of populist or anti-systemic

parties ridding the anti-corruption ticket; the latter refers to the contextual conditions that might facilitate or constrain such capacity, such as shifts in the economy, the overall quality of state institutions, the independence of the media and judiciary, etc.

Environment-based conditions

The economic context

The economic context of an election plays a key role in shaping voters' judgements on corruption at the ballot box ([136, 9, 96]). Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga consider that 'the way in which individuals apply their perceptions of corruption to measures of political support is conditioned by the state of the economy' ([143]: 1). In other words, voters are willing to '"look the other way" when economic times are good, while exacting a significant toll for government malfeasance when times are bad' ([143]: 21). Consequently, anti-corruption campaigns against a particular administration are likely to be more effective during periods of economic crisis.

In contexts of hard economic conditions, citizens are particularly more sensitive to corruption. What makes people react to corruption is not so much their conviction that it is a bad thing but the fact that they cannot find a plausible explanation for their sudden loss of wellbeing and the perceived widening gap between *haves* and *have nots* in society. In a context of crisis, characterised by economic stagnation and high unemployment, it is hard for traditional elites to justify allegations and proven instances of abuse of office and its prerogatives for personal benefit or their parties' advantage. Financial impropriety in office, or simply the privileges specific to elective office, are exploited as symbols of ostentation contrasting with the hard living conditions of sectors of the population or as undue privileged treatment at the tax payers' expense, if not the cause and justification of the people's declining wellbeing [31]. Not surprisingly, these contexts are propitious for populism to thrive: populism offers voters a rudimentary manner of expressing their discontent and translate their fears and uncertainties into protest votes.

Conversely, when the economy is growing at a fast rate, with a thriving middle class and an overall improvement of living standards in a society, citizens tend to become more lax about the conduct of their leaders. The distancing of citizens from politics, the trading of plural debate for stability and the responsible management of the public purse for affluence, and the blind faith in party leaders and the silencing of debate inside party organisations are common in these contexts of major shifts in the relationship State–economy–society and provide a fertile ground for complacency towards corruption. Tolerance for misconduct in office becomes proportional to the stability and affluence enhanced and enjoyed by citizens through sudden social, economic, and political/institutional transformations. As Susan Pharr noticed with regard to the Italian case during the 1980s, 'Over time […] we suggest, a citizenry receiving high material rewards from its contract with leaders among whom misconduct was routine not only turned a blind eye to corruption at election time but also returned the party to power again and again, they come to believe that the game was worth the candle. They not only overlooked corruption at voting time, they came to accept the practices themselves and to believe that prosperity depended on them' ([101]: 30). Barberá and Fernández-Vázquez [9] underline this trade-off at the ballot

box: voters tend to reward electorally corrupt practices in so far as these offer economic benefits in the short term.

The dominant political culture

Electoral tolerance of corruption may also be a product of more ingrained cultural predispositions and institutional failures. A situation similar to what Banfield [8] described in the Italian village of Montegrano ('brutal and senseless') characterised by poorly performing state institutions and a sort of systemic "Hobbesian state of nature", of "all against all", with low levels of interpersonal solidarity and trust, low levels of confidence in institutions and low levels of law and order, is basically a context with low moral costs, where individual interests and passions are pursued at all costs with no consideration for any sense of constraint or negative externalities of individual interest optimisation. As Gunnar Myrdal [92] once wrote, in a context where everybody is expected to be corrupt, why should one act virtuously? Obviously in such low trust contexts, we may still find altruistic individuals, community carers and all sort of heroic postures, but these tend to be the exception rather than the rule, as engaging into corrupt transactions becomes a social norm ([120]: 126). Corruption is more likely to be tolerated at the ballot box in contexts based on low levels of social and institutional trust.

Different types of corruption may trigger different degrees of public condemnation. It is, above all, the discrepancy between the manifestations as depicted by laws governing public life and in the psychosocial mentality of members of society ([132]: 430), and between the practices of political elites and the expectations and standards held by the mass public [53], that leads to the condemnation of corruption in society [31].

Heidenheimer's [53] definition of black, grey, and white types of corruption in relation to a variation of elite- and public-based standards denotes a certain qualitative gradation of the phenomenon product of value change. Some practices/behaviours, (often) collusive and subject to prosecution, are regarded as severe violations of the legal and moral norms set in society (*black corruption*) by both political elites and voters. These infringements are likely to be met by penal action and legal sanctioning when duly exposed. In contexts where corruption is perceived by both political elites and voters as "a way of life", "an informal way of doing politics", "the grease that oils the system" (*white corruption*), the coercive nature of the law loses its meaning. In neither of these two contexts will corruption be sanctioned at the ballot box. It is rather the "*greyness*" of corruption judgements that promotes the demand for reform in the system and triggers electoral punishment, because existing legal and moral standards are no longer seen as operational by segments of the political elite and the electorate. The waves of anticorruption in general and electoral punishment of corruption in particular that took place in various European countries in the past two decades can only be understood in the light of a significant discrepancy between ruling elites' understanding and practice of democracy and voters' expectations on how it should perform [31]. In short, practices or conducts that are considered to be corrupt by both political elites and voters are more heavily condemned than those for which there is no agreement upon its meaning or impact [31, 32, 59, 100, 140].

The quality of intitutions

Manzetti and Wilson stress that the overall quality of state institutions may reduce the electoral consequences of corruption, by creating incentives to good governance and raise legal and moral costs to corruption: 'People in countries where government institutions are weak and patron–client relationships strong are more likely to support a corrupt leader from whom they expect to receive tangible benefits' ([81]: 950).

Both actual and perceived levels of corruption reduce trust in politicians, public servants and institutions [3, 5, 23, 89, 126, 127]. The perception of how partial (or impartial) political institutions are, the levels of social trust in society and institutions, and the level of social equality and redistribution of wealth are important variables to understand voters' tolerance of corruption [120].

Rivero and Fernández-Vázquez [116] and Jiménez [58] stress that politicians have less to do with their personal moral standards and more with poorly designed institutions. According to the authors, the way Spanish local government is structured creates a series of opportunities for illicit rent-seeking with low legal or moral costs to the wrongdoers: low levels of administrative accountability, lack of financial capacity or sustainability, poor quality of land and urban planning regulations, are among some of the administrative features explaining the rise of corruption in recent years.

The independence of the media

Chang et al. [24] warns that a vigilant and free press is a key condition for political accountability in democracies. For them, an independent judiciary is not a sufficient condition to help voters throw the rascals out. As the Italian case shows, only when the press began reporting political corruption on a daily basis, disclosing the complex networks and legal implications of yet another scandal, did corruption become salient to voters.

Costas et al. [20] and Chong et al. [27] consider that an extensive mass coverage of corruption scandals can substantially increase the likelihood of electoral punishment. The link between the quality and reliability of information sources and citizens' awareness of the extent and implications of corrupt practices has been widely studied [37, 59, 106].

Low-awareness voters may be less able to assess the relevance and quality of cues [69, 78] or to link their retrospective judgements to vote choice than high-awareness voters [30]. A poorly informed voter may not be able to tell apart an act of malfeasance punishable by law from an instance of negative campaigning. In short, highly informed voters may better understand the negative consequences of corruption than poorly informed ones [62]. Moreover, low awareness can make voters more susceptible to propaganda and dominant incumbent campaigns [69, 142], both likely to be prominent when the election features a corruption charge against the running incumbent.

The reliability of information sources and the voters capacity to process it gain additional relevance when corruption becomes a proeminent issue in the public debate and party manifestos. Caínzos and Jiménez [17] consider that corruption must be a core issue in the electoral agenda and a key social problem to influence the voter's choice. Similarly, Bågenholm [13] demonstrates that the negative electoral

consequences of coruption grow when it is politicised. Barreiro and Sánchez-Cuenca [10] suggest that citizens give more importance to how corrupt representatives and their parties react to corruption scandals than to the emergence of the scandal itself.

System-based conditions

The nature of the electoral system and the type of elections

Some aspects of the electoral system may constrain citizens' ability to punish corruption [22, 24, 70, 97].

The type of election, whether it is of first- or a second-order, matters to the likelihood of voters punishing an incumbent for being involved in corruption scandals. In other words, electoral punishment varies across different types of elections. In Japan, voters were more prone to punish the Liberal Democrat Party (LDP) for scandals in elections to the Senate than in those to the House of Representatives [15, 114], while in Spain, the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) mobilised a greater number of voters in the 1993 and 1996 general elections than during the 1994 European elections or the 1995 local and regional elections [59]. Second-order elections seem to allow voters for 'a greater degree of "expressive tactical voting" in order to send warning signals to the party in government, while this does not necessarily mean that voters will not support that party in the general election' ([59]: 206).

Whereas the "tactical voting" thesis may hold true for most European elections, where voters do not associate the act of voting to the selection of an executive body with decisional capacity, the same does not hold true at the sub-national level. One of the recurrent discussions about representative local democracy concerns its degree of autonomy in relation to national politics. Multi-level governance [54] implies 'multiple arenas for political competition, strategic opportunities for political actors, and possibilities for electors to use their votes tactically' [94]. The term 'second-order elections' originally developed in reference to European Elections [111] has now been tentatively used to explain electoral behaviour in local elections [44]. This conceptual stretching is not consensual. Local elections have their own logic, modus operandi and agenda, and these are not always permeable to or determined by national issues [52, 85, 107].

The fact that electoral punishment is generally more sensitive during local/regional elections than legislative ones has less to do with the second-order nature of elections than with the local institutional arrangements and political cultures. Some explanatory variables are likely to lose intensity as we move our focus from the local to the national political arena. The relationship between the voter and his candidate assumes a different meaning, whether we are talking of a programmatic or non-programmatic election. In non-programmatic elections, clientelistic exchanges are ordinary and constrain the voters' willingness and capacity to sanction their candidates' integrity at the ballot box [63]. The relationship of gratitude and reciprocity between voters and political patrons observable in local elections can hardly be replicated in legislative elections, where the link between the provider and the addressee of public goods/services is not so direct. Therefore, when assessing the electoral implications of corruption, it is important to take into consideration the incumbent under scrutiny and the level at which a punitive vote is being expressed.

Local government elections are particularly useful to try to understand electoral punishment, because the nature and levels of accountability between rulers and ruled is more difficult to ascertain. In most countries, local authorities have little or no fiscal capacity of their own: they spend but they do not tax, which means that Mayors are always regarded as the providers, whereas the "bad guys" (i.e. those who tax and impose fiscal austerity) are the central government authorities. The way clientelistic networks are structured and function at the local level conditions electoral punishment as a rational evaluation of several variables of performance including integrity.

Corruption allegations affect a candidate's fate differently if these are made public during primary or presidential elections. In the American political system, where party candidates have to go through a lengthy and competitive internal process of selection prior to the presidential elections, corruption scandals may work as a valuable natural selection factor for party candidates, but without necessarily determining the party's fate at the ballot box. If a scandal affects one of the running candidates, there is still time to register a new one, whereas, if the scandal breaks out during presidential elections, the implications can be decisive to the party in question.

Majoritarian electoral systems with larger single- or multiple-member districts and lower barriers to access are often related with less corruption than proportional representation (PR) systems where candidates are selected from party lists with more limited individual accountability mechanisms [70]. According to Persson et al. 'voting on party lists (the career-concern effect) or in relatively small electoral districts (the barriers-to-entry effect) reduce the effectiveness with which voters can exploit the ballot to deter corruption' ([98]: 21). For Reed [110], however, multi-member districts, which are often associated with higher elvels of accountability, also offer some constraints to electoral punishment, since it allows for competition among candidates of the same party. In other words, multi-member districts enabled Japanese voters to punish corrupt LDP candidates individually without punishing the party as a whole. Hence, while some factions were removed from office, the clientelistic nature of the political system remained untouched.

Access to the electoral game is also an important factor infuencing electoral punishment of corrutpion. If the electoral system makes it difficult for new parties to enter with success in the electoral process, not only is there a greater incentive for established parties to abuse office ([91]: 119, [71]: 76, 81, [59]: 203) but the likelihood is that they will do so without being punished at the ballot box [103]. As LaPalombara put it, 'Where alternations in government cannot or do not occur or do not bring the opposition effectively to power, we will encounter the most pernicious instances of market corruption' ([73]: 340). In other words, electoral systems with high barriers-to-entry, greatly reduce the possibility for party alternatives to emerge.

The nature of the party system and the type of parties

Although there is no consensus with regard to the causal links between corruption and the nature of the party system ([71]: 76), empirical findings seem to indicate that certain systemic features of the party system are likely to facilitate or constrain voters' capacity to hold politicians accountable for their wrongdoing. Party systems that enable new party formations to emerge, generate power alternatives, make voters' more aware of the reputation and career path of their candidates, and help them

selecting clean politicians, and to hold accountable those who are not, are expected to have a greater impact in reducing corruption.

In highly institutionalised systems, parties have on average a better control over the selection of candidates and this has direct implications for their reputation [79]. When parties ensure some degree of integrity screening and enforce ethical standards to their candidates and representatives, they help the cumulative building of party reputations and enhance the value of party labels for voters [21, 38, 128], and for that reason are likely to influence electoral punishment of corruption. As Schleiter and Voznaya point out, 'More informative party labels and reputations limit adverse selection and moral hazard because they enable voters to employ party labels as reliable shortcuts in distinguishing good and bad types of politicians instead of acquiring detailed knowledge about individual ministers and legislators. Second, in institutionalised party systems, the repeated interaction among a stable set of competitors improves the opportunities for opposition politicians to form strategic coalitions and mount credible challenges to corrupt incumbents' ([122]: 10).

In poorly institutionalised party systems, 'electoral success is exclusively determined by party membership' ([71]: 76). In such a context, parties become permeable to a new breed of politicians with high tactical and managerial skills but low rectitude standards. This "business politician", as termed by Pizzorno [103], is essentially a type of politician with very few personal capacities/qualities before entering the political game (*capitale iniziale*), such as wealth, social prestige, first-hand and professional experience or intellectual qualities. They are recruited by party organisations for their despicable distaste for *gentlemen rules* (with which they do not identify themselves) and their lack of fear in using whatever means available to success (even if that requires engaging in illicit or improper exchanges). Given their lack of solid qualities justifying their recruitment and presence in politics, business politicians rely on a series of appearances (*sicurezze di superficie*) through which they are able to impose their personality vis-à-vis traditional politicians, whose careers may actually depend on the "dirty" tricks and malfeasance of the former. Their "strong" personality is shaped by arrogance, exhibitionism, daring, the ability to take arbitrary decisions "in the name of the cause" and, more importantly, the ability to establish improper relationships with whatever political, social or market actors, and to cross the line of legality whenever the occasion requires ([103]: 21–26). Part of the unpopularity parties have come to enjoy in recent years is related to their acquired reputation of mechanisms for personal enrichment and social climbing. As Rogow and Lasswell alerted us, 'If the membership of an institution does not collectively enforce rectitude standards, the tendency toward individual corruption is increased' ([117]: 58–59). The effectiveness of internal party accountability mechanisms improves the quality of information available to voters and their ability to sanction politicians ([59]: 202).

The degree of competition in the party system is also an important factor influencing the degree of electoral punishment in a given country. In principle, electoral punishment is unlikely to happen in contexts where one party is dominant, for various reasons: it reduces the capacity of the party system to produce credible alternatives, thus limiting voters' choice; it reduces the quality of credible information about corruption allegations affecting the incumbent; it increases disproportionally the costs of voice and exit in comparison to the payoffs enjoyed by loyalty; and it also creates

incentives for other parties to collude with the incumbent, thus compromising voters' ability to distinguish between clean and corrupt types of politicians. If the absence of pluralism and party competition constrains voters' capacity and willingness to punish corrupt incumbents, party system fragmentation also negatively affects 'the electoral control of politicians because it shapes the effectiveness of the choices and the quality of information available to voters' ([122]: 11).

The degree of competition in the party system plays a role in the levels of politicisation of corruption during elections, because, *ceteris paribus*, 'where there is more competition, there is more information available and increased campaign awareness' ([112]: 103). In dominant-party systems or cartelised party systems with a high degree of government and opposition collusion, party leaders will act cohesively and avoid starting a self-destructive all-out war of accusations. Once this strategic confidence is undermined and breaks up, accusations start to fire across the board, implicating all parties, as happened during the *mani pulite* investigations in Italy. The whole party system will be discredited and become further de-institutionalised and polarised or even collapse.

In advanced democracies, most corruption at stake is not about individual wrongdoing but systemic practices, hence parties are more cautious in using it as a political weapon. Only new parties (virgins) or excluded ones (tribune parties) are likely to contest the issue during elections. Hence, the existence of populist or anti-systemic parties riding the anti-corruption ticket makes a difference with regard to the politicisation of corruption [14]. Opposition to corruption is related to the anti-establishment element of populism [19, 41, 67, 86, 87, 90].

Anti-corruption is a policy issue different from other campaigning issues by the simple fact that it does not create a fracture in society. Nobody favours corruption. Everybody prefers clean government. Hence, the politicisation of corruption during elections is less about corruption control policies and more about the integrity of rival candidates. The objective is accusatory and not policy oriented.

Notwithstanding these system- and environment-based conditions provide incentives or constraints for electoral punishment, they are not sufficient to explain voters' decision to reward or punish their corrupt politicians. As Barberá and Fernández-Vázquez [9] point out in their article; macro-level data can only offer a partial explanation to the causal mechanisms of electoral punishment of corruption.

Micro-level factors

Voters' decision to punish or reward a politician on Election Day is not solely determined by contextual factors. Voting is a formal expression of an individual's choice, hence it results from the application of individual-level values, information and knowledge. Individuals have a tendency or inclination to react in a certain way to certain situations according to a given set of individual features and values shaping their personality and understanding of the world that surrounds them. These individual features and values help voters to distinguish between good and bad conduct in office, to associate cost or benefits to a particular course of action, and hence help them solving ethical dilemmas. These predispositions are different from one individual to another. Predispositions are not the same as attitudes. Attitudes are judgments.

These judgements interpret events according to certain value predispositions and organise opinions into interrelated structures or mind frames. Most attitudes are the result of either practice, that is, direct experience or observational learning.

Individual *predispositions* (i.e. features of the individual that might condition his/her willingness to punish/reward corruption at the ballot) and *attitudes* (i.e. reasons for punishing or not corrupt candidates) influence voters' preferences. When it comes to micro-level explanations, most studies have focused primarily on individual features, i.e. predispositions—such as the level of education, the job situation and professional background, gender, age, levels of interpersonal trust, etc.—that might condition voters' willingness to punish corrupt politicians at the ballot box. The literature has been short of explanations centred on voters' justifications for such action, i.e. attitudes towards electoral punishment of corruption. In this special issue, we offer a new set of individual-level factors behind a voters' decision to punish/reward corrupt politicians at the ballot box.

Voters' predispositions

The level of education, laboural situation, professional background, gender, age, socio-economic status and level of social trust have been mentioned in the literature as variables that might predispose voters to punish or tolerate corruption at the ballot box.

Banfield was probably one of the first authors to consider that cultural practices and social imaginaries affect the way citizens perceive corruption and point out that, in a society with "amoral familism", nobody will defend the group or the community interest, unless it gets personal adventages for doing so ([8]: 83–84). In a similar vein, Redlawsk and McCann [108] conclude that 'residents of small cities and towns think about corruption in somewhat different terms than citizens living in large metropolitan areas' and suggest that 'older Americans and women are more inclined to apply the label corrupt to any number of behaviors in politics, even those that are not strictly illegal'.

For a large number of authors, the propensity to punish electorally an incumbent involved in a case of corruption depends largely upon voters' levels of education. Individuals have different skills to deal with and interpret information concerning the integrity of their candidates. Barberá and Fernández-Vázquez [9] underline the relevance of education for understanding a complex thing such as corruption and allocating responsabilities to candidates, politicians or public officials. In the case of Mexico, McCann and Domínguez [84] point out that 'better educated voters are more likely to accurately perceive the incidence of corruption in their cities'. Similarly, Pérez Díaz [95] argues that, in Spain, Partido Popular supporters are better educated than Socialist Party supporters, hence they are more prone to punish corruption at the ballot box. Caínzos and Jiménez [17] could not test this idea. Víctor Pérez-Díaz uses the composition of the electorates as a variable to undestand tolerance to corruption in the 1993 and 1996 Spanish general elections. The fact that Partido Popular's voter were mostly young, educated and urban individuals, argues the author, can explain a greater moral sensitivity to scandals because they were more concerned about public issues and more demanding of their representatives. Caínzos and Jiménez [17] tested this hypothesis and the result was negative. The belief that highly educated voters are less prone to tolerate corruption is a contested one.

Other studies suggest a direct link between partisanship and electoral tolerance of corruption. Partisans tend to show more biased evaluations of the incumbent's performance [34, 68] and are less likely to punish corruption among their candidates and politicians [4, 26, 33, 51]. Stoker [134] analyses Gary Hart's affair and showed how partisan support to the incumbent is not homogeneous and, after a scandal, can turn into hostile judgments on the candidate's character.

Low-awareness voters may have less knowledge and understanding of the consequences of corruption, but they may be more sensitive to the media's hypersensationalism and assume a more anti-establishment position. Moreover, sophisticated voters tend to be more knowledgeable of and more concerned about policy issues, and thus downplay the importance of integrity to assess a candidate's performance in office.

In this sense, Michael Johnston [61], remarks that more educated citizens, as well as those with better income, might be better informed about politics, and thus might be more aware of and less offended by narrow-minded, self-interested government officials. Those who are unfamiliar with the often petty give-and-take of politics could have higher expectations of altruistic behaviour. Moreover, individuals with higher status might be accustomed to receiving particular benefits and services from government. Jackson and Smith [57] raise a similar point in their comparison of elite versus non-elite beliefs about corruption in New South Wales, Australia.

Corruption scandals can have a different meaning from one individual to another and play greater or lesser role in structuring voters' choice. However, information about a given corruption scandal does not necessarily mean that citizens will be shocked or surprised. This only happens when there is a discrepancy between citizens' expectations or visions about political life and the contrasting nature of what is reported in the press [106].

Gender has also been listed as an individual feature that is likely to affect voters' tolerance to corruption [57, 80, 100]. Swamy et al. [138] consider that countries where more women are both in Parliament and in the laboral market show lower levels of perceived corrupion. Husted [56] argues that, in countries where women are more empowered, politicians are more likely to stress the importance of ethical issues. The assumption that women are more honest than men [138] has been contested ([137]) or not validated by survey data [32].

Age is an individual-level variable that points towards contrasting conclusions. For Gardiner [45], there is a negative correlation between age and the severity of ethical judgments. In other words, younger voters tend to be less tolerant towards corruption. Gibbons [48] observed an inverse relationship with regard to illicit party financing and conflict of interests' affairs. Jackson and Smith [57] argue that the level of condemnation was higher at either end of the scale and less so for the intermediary age groups. Mancuso et al. [80] argues the opposite: toleration is more common among elder and younger voters.

The literature also stresses that the laboural situation of voters, in particular unemployment, strongly affects their electoral behaviour and preferences [82, 105]. Due to their precarious situation, those unemployed or sub-employed suffer more and are expected to be more sensitive to grand corruption if they are aware of its negative impact in economy. However, Jeanne Becquart-Leclercq [12] alerts us to the existence of two levels of anchorage of social judgements: a symbolic level, where

corruption is always perceived as a "bad thing", and a strategic one, where citizens weigh the costs and benefits of their actions and engage in corruption (even if they consider it an immoral practice) to solve their problems and satisfy their needs. This paradox is of great importance to understand why citizens, notwithstanding condemning corruption, openly continue voting in corrupt politicians or close their eyes to some practices in their administration that have become a routine and socially acceptable. Although citizens in a precarious situation may be very sensitive to grand corruption and easily align with anti-establishment and anti-parliamentarian protest voting during general elections, when it comes to local elections they will vote strategically and condole their incumbent's misdeeds in so far as they have directly benefitted from his/her policies.

La Porta et al. [74] and Della Porta and Vannucci [29] consider that higher levels of institutional trust are quintessential to voters' responsiveness to corruption. When citizens do not trust the State as an agent to solve their problems with fairness, impartiality and efficiency, they will look for alternative means to address their needs and turn a blind eye to the incumbent's corruption. This hypothesis needs further testing, since one of the paradoxes observable in recent years is the lack of electoral punishment of corrupt behaviour in advanced democracies with higher levels of social capital and a more informed citizenry.

Voter's justifications for not throwing the rascals out

There is no single reason why voters do not punish corrupt candidates during elections. Although this article does not attempt at general theorising on the reasons and conditions that lead voters to tolerate corruption, we make a modest contribution to the understanding of why electoral punishment of corruption fails to materialise by discussing seven theory-grounded exploratory hypotheses/dimensions. Voters do not "through the rascals out" at the ballot box because:

- They lack truthful/validated information about the candidate's wrongdoing;
- They do not trust Justice and, consequently, they downplay the importance of judicial indictments or court sentences to gauge the candidate's integrity;
- They never question the party's selection of candidates: their candidate right or wrong, is always their candidate;
- They are direct beneficiaries of the incumbent's discretionary, clientelistic or non-programmatic redistributive policies of public decisions, benefits and services;
- Their participation in politics is primarily determined by the fulfilment of their own interests and basic needs, hence they value efficacy above any other ethical standard, such as integrity, transparency or even legality;
- They believe that power corrupts and that by definition all politicians are corrupt, hence it does not matter whom you vote, since there are no "clean" alternatives.
- They do not consider integrity as an electorally relevant issue: parties and candidates get elected for their programmes and for the results of their policies while in office.

Let us now explore more in detail each of these hypotheses.

Voters lack truthful/validated information about the candidate's wrongdoing

One of the problems addressed in the literature is that voters may lack access to credible information ([141]: 3). According to Klasnja [64], 'less-informed voters are found to be significantly more likely to vote for incumbents accused of corruption relative to clean incumbents than their well-informed counterparts'. For this author, 'an across-the-board increase in political awareness would systematically reduce the support for malfeasant incumbents' ([64]: 1).

However, Klasnja admits that less informed voters might compensate their lack of information through reference groups [76, 77, 130], "gut-level" reasoning [104], or simple retrospective judgments of incumbent performance [43, 131].

Not only has corruption become a recurrent issue during elections, it has also been used as a weapon to damage the image of political opponents. In such a context of politicisation, it is inevitable that targeted politicians seek to persuade voters about their innocence. Because these allegations are hard to prove beyond reasonable doubt in such a short period of time, it is logical that citizens ignore these legal tests of the candidate's integrity and vote for him/her.

Despite voters ignoring the candidate's legal situation, lack of information 'cannot explain all instances of voting in favour of a corrupt candidate' [100]. In some cases, regardless of the level of information on the candidate's legal liability, voters decide to support him/her anyway. One major shortcoming of this hypothesis is that it believes that, because voters condemn corruption in general, they will undoubtedly vote against it if they really know that a politician is corrupt [1, 47, 139, 141]. However, as Chang and Kerr [26] pointed out, perception and tolerance are two different things. The authors define perception of corruption 'as the degree to which citizens believe that a political actor or entity is in engaged in corrupt practices', whereas tolerance 'denotes citizens' proclivity to condone political actors' engagement in corruption' ([26]: 4). Using data from *Africabarometer*, they show that 'variation in corruption perceptions does not necessarily account for variation in corruption tolerance'. Perception and tolerance are 'shaped by different factors and have different political consequences' ([26]: 4).

Some studies prove that voters will punish corrupt politicians if they have credible information about their wrongdoing. The Brazilian case corroborates this thesis. In 2003, the Brazilian government launched an anti-corruption program. Several municipalities were randomly selected to be audited. The main objective was to assess the use of municipal funds and encourage civil participation in monitoring public expenditures. Based on the assumption that citizens disapprove of corruption but do not have enough information to punish corrupt politicians, Ferraz and Finan [40] state that the publication of the audit results reduced the probability of corrupt Mayors' re-election. In those municipalities where at least two corruption acts were reported, the probability of re-election decreased 7 percentage points. Moreover, Mayors who got re-elected despite being involved in corruption cases got fewer votes. According to the authors, social condemnation was severer in municipalities that had local radio stations. In addition, the dissemination of audit results through local radio stations favoured non-corrupt Mayors. In short, Ferraz and Finan [40] consider that voters update their perceptions about the integrity of politicians through credible information and, in this way, they change their voting behaviour. For them, perception and intolerance of corruption go hand in hand.

Brollo [16] analysed 'the role the central government plays in the Brazilian anti-corruption program in circumstances in which corrupt practices are accompanied by high levels of federally transferred recourses'. According to the author, the loss of reputation of corrupt politicians does not matter in a context of clientelism. For her, central Government played a major role in fighting corruption by reducing the amount of transfers to politicians revealed to be corrupt. When corruption was reported, the national authorities in Brasilia reduced the amount of infrastructure transfers to the corrupt municipalities. However, it reduced those transfers selectively according to party affiliation ([16]: 27). Brollo's suggestion is that, in Brazil, voters punished corrupt politicians 'because they know about the corruption evidence, but only care about corruption because it may cause a reduction in transfers' ([16]: 3).

One of the weak points of Bollo's analysis is that it is based on the assumption that voters are rational, hold similar preferences, knowledgeable of what goes behind the political scenes and have sufficient competences to assess the real impact that changes in the overall budget have upon their particular economies. The view that the transfer of infrastructure funds is key to all local economies is also misleading.

Notwithstanding that voters have sufficient information about the ethical conduct of their candidate, and are aware of his/her involvement in corrupt exchanges, they may still decide to support him/her. This downplaying of corruption in elections results from a paradox of social condemnation: although voters are conscious that corruption causes severe social, economic, institutional and political damage, they are still prepared to tolerate it in so far as their personal interests are satisfied. According to Jeanne Becquart-Leclercq [12], this paradox is explained by the fact that there are two levels of anchorage of people's judgments about corruption: a symbolic level, based on abstract morals, and a strategic one, based on the application of morality to real circumstances. These two levels are not always in accordance.

Voters do not trust the judicial system hence they do not trust court decisions or indictments on corruption

The rule of law is quintessential to the quality of democracy. The conduction of free and fair elections on a regular basis does not automatically lead to a fairer and just democratic society. The fact that people are able to freely choose their leaders does not necessarily mean that they will subject themselves to the rule of law. The number of electoral democracies has increased dramatically in recent years, but without a proportional decrease in corruption, inequality, poverty and human rights violations. Abuses of power have remained as widespread under democratic as previous authoritarian rule. As James Madison put it, 'In framing a government to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself' [79]. The difficulty lies precisely in ensuring that power is bounded by and subject to law, not only in formal but also substantive terms. According to Guillermo O'Donnell, in a democracy, the rule of law has to be "democratic" ([93]: 35–36). This means two things: the existence of a set of laws that grant and protect political and civil rights of citizens and a functioning legal system that lives up to their expectations.

Notwithstanding that many democracies display an array of rights and very ambitious constitutions, the performance of their judicial system is poor. Where the

judicial system is unable to function properly and to counter the spread of corruption and abuse of power, citizens lose their sense of justice, if they were ever able to develop one. Consequently, if citizens do not trust the judicial system, it is hard to conceive that they will trust any indictment or judgment on political corruption coming from an institutional entity that has not enough moral prestige to give credit to its decisions. In such a context, voters may consider that accusations are matters of cheap-talks to damage the reputation of the electoral opponent ([40]: 704) and that the truth has been distorted by a politically biased or ineffective judicial system, hence the indictments or judgments raised against their candidate are perceived as a set-up.

Rivero and Fernández-Vázquez ([116]: 10) warn that the credibility of a prosecution depends not only on its effectiveness in sanctioning the wrongdoing of politicians on a regular basis but also on media interests and, more importantly, on the preferences of those who consume the information. In a context where justice fails to materialise in an objective and impartial manner, citizens develop their own understanding of justice based on two popular assumptions: the belief that justice is not blind, and that it systematically favours the powerful and rich against the weak and poor; and the belief that, because justice is not objective, the results can never be truthful and trustworthy. The justice that citizens want does not necessarily match the justice that ought to be in accordance with the law. The confrontational nature of justice is distorted: there are no conflicting perspectives/parties before the law; there is instead a justice system against the people's belief of justice.

In short, the judicial system's popular legitimacy and reputation is key to citizens' judgment of corruption allegations, and it will ultimately influence their decision to condemn or absolve the accused at the ballot box.

They never question the party's selection of candidates: their candidate right or wrong is always their candidate

As was said before, Chang and Kerr [26] claim that perception and tolerance of corruption are different things with different implications. Consequently, they propose an analysis of the voters' insider or outsider status and suggest that attitudes towards corruption depend on this. In their work, the authors determine that part identity influences the level of tolerance of corruption. In this sense, they determine three types of insiders—patronage, partisan, and ethnic—and two analytic dimensions: cost–benefit instrumentality (whether one belongs to the patronage network of the incumbent) and affective identity (whether one has a partisan or ethnic affiliation with the incumbent). Their analysis shows that 'voters view corruption through the lens of identity, and that partisan and ethnic insiders are more likely to turn a blind eye to corruption' ([26]: 4). In this sense, 'patronage insiders, although perceiving more corruption, ironically are more forgiving about it. Meanwhile, partisan and ethnic insiders tend to perceive less corruption' ([26]: 4).

Other authors have also stressed the sentimental or ideological links between voters and their preferred candidates. Peters and Welch [100] consider that 'the voter prefers to cast his/her vote favoring a corrupt candidate as the candidate belongs to the party he/she prefers and the political agenda of the party matters more than the candidate'. In the same way, Rundquist et al. [121] remark that voters might prefer a corrupt politician who had policy views similar to their own to a clean candidate who did not represent their preferences.

The emotional closeness between voters and their candidates can hinder an objective the understanding of democratic life. Kurer [71] warns that in certain political contexts those voters who are closer to those wielding political, economic and bureaucratic power may consider that they have the right to receive a privileged treatment. This perverts the classical division between a public and private sphere ([119]: 91) upon which the juridical and legal discourse of Western modern societies is built.

They are direct beneficiaries of the incumbent's (discretionary, clientelistic or non-programmatic) redistributive policies of public benefits and services

The pursuit of personal advantages or private profit is another issue that drives tolerance of corruption. Winters and Weitz-Shapiro [141] assert that voters who support corrupt politicians 'are more likely to expect that the politician will provide them with particularistic goods'. For the Latin-American case, Manzetti and Wilson [81] claim that corrupt politicians who satisfy their clientelistic networks with public resources are more likely to keep political support and stay in power.

For many authors, clientelism is one of the historical forms in which interests are represented and promoted in political society. It is 'a practical (although in many ways undesirable) solution to the problem of democratic representation' ([118]: 360). Chang and Kerr [26], following Strokes [135], define clientelism as 'the informal, mutually beneficial exchange relationship in which a patron offers material benefits in return for the electoral support, deference, or allegiance of a client'. According to Kitschelt and Wilkinson [63], it is a 'transaction, the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payment or continuing access to employment, goods, and services'. Auyero et al. ([6]: 4) remark that 'clientelist relations are a complex cocktail of the four different forms of social interaction identified by Simmel in his classic *On Individuality and Social Forms*: exchange, conflict, domination and prostitution', and imply exchange of two types of resources and services: 'instrumental (e.g., economic and political) and sociational or expressive (e.g. promises of loyalty and solidarity)'. Scott considers that clientelism is caused by 'the patterns of political beliefs and loyalties that prevail among voters' ([125]: 104).

No matter how disputable these definitions may be, they are, nevertheless, sufficiently broad to capture three general characteristics of clientelism: (1) the asymmetry of power discernible in patron-client relationships; (2) the quid pro quo nature of the exchanges attendant upon such relationships; and (3) the scope and durability of the relationships.

Although the literature on clientelism tends to consider that patronage systems serve the interest of voters whose income is low and variable, Kurer [71] reminds that this claim is empirically unsubstantiated. Clientelism is not only directed to benefit those who are in an underprivileged situation, it also works for those who are insiders of the benefit market or who know how the clientelistic system operates (because some friends, relatives or colleagues are insiders or have reliable information about it). According to Johnston [61], citizens with higher social status can be more tolerant to certain types of petty corruption because they are used to have particular benefits, services and advantages from officials and politicians. In consequence, they may consider themselves beneficiaries of the spoils system in the future.

Auyero also claims that the relationship between clientelism and electoral support is far from being stable and not only a matter of exchange of votes for favours. He suggests that:

> clientelist networks are, in effect, domination networks but that their effectiveness as a mechanism of electoral mobilisation is far from certain. Because clientelist domination depends on everyday, strong, face-to-face relationships, it has certain limitations in terms of massive vote-getting capacity ([7]: 300).

Patronage politics consolidate a way of understanding politics in which it is not the State's obligation to solve people's problems and redistribute goods and services, but it is the "sacrifice" and "personal dedication" of a group of brokers and patrons that provide such solutions, because they "really want" to help their citizens/clients ([7]: 314). In this sense, the reproduction and consolidation of the clientelistic networks and their legitimacy is a matter of trust, solidarity, reciprocity, caring and hope ([7]: 324).

It is necessary to distinguish between clientelism and personal interest, because the two variables together may not be harmonious. It is not only personal interest that motivates citizens to become clients or protégés of a given political boss and to support the clientelistic system but also necessity and, sometimes, fear. A voter, recognising that he is immersed into the benefit system, can also understand that the bond that ties him to his leader/master is fragile and enslaved if continued for a long time. However, the client cannot get out of it because of his precarious status.

Corruption—and clientelism—create a collective action problem [46]. As Kurer [71] pointed out, voters can accept that a non-corrupt politician is better than a corrupt one but, being part of the clientelistic system, voting against corruption is a valid option only if the voters suppose that everybody will act in this way. This collective action problem explains the perpetuation of clientelistic networks. Nobody wants to take a step further unilaterally. This reluctance to change is justified in so far as citizens do not want to find themselves excluded from the benefit system for defending higher causes that nobody else is interested in defending. In short, nobody wants to play "the sucker".

Political parties have also a dilemma of support clientelism. If they reject it, they can lose the support of their protégés, and if they accept it as an electoral weapon, they may have to spread it in order to win new voters. In this sense, Scott [125] considers that the incentives that motivate a clientele are more important for a political party than the need or possibility of attempt to change the essence of those incentives.

This approach is not sufficient to explain why people vote on corrupt politicians. Undoubtedly, some citizens do benefit from clientelistic networks and political corruption in the short term, but in the longer term the consequences of these practices to the material welfare of average voters are devastating ([71]: 71).

Their participation in politics is primarily determined by the fulfilment of their basic needs, hence they value efficacy above any other ethical standard, such as integrity, transparency or even legality ("Rouba mas faz" = he robs but gets things done)

Peters and Welch suggest another explanatory variable: 'Voters know perfectly well that the candidate is corrupt, but they trade their vote. They prefer a dishonest politician who active in redistributing rents and privileges, even if this implies illegal or criminal behavior, to an honest one who fails to does so' [100].

As Riley [115] put it, voters tend to analyse politics more in an instrumental way than through the eyes of ideology. This means that their participation is much more concerned with the fulfilment of their basic needs, then the protection of any abstract definition of collective good or political imaginary. They value efficacy above all other ethical standards, such as integrity, transparency or even legality.

Against a background of poor institutional performance and high informal political exchanges, such a functionalist conception of politics creates the conditions for condoning corruption for a just cause. Robin Hood corruption is common where the State fails to perform its functions, either because it is captured by a small clique of interests or simply because its bureaucracy is obsolete, heavy, insensitive to people's problems and obstructive to the private initiative. In such a context, corruption is perceived as 'an informal way of doing politics' ([125]: 2) that helps to 'grease the wheels' of a system with low redistributive capacity [75] and to unblock access to public goods, services and decisions by certain groups deprived of other conventional means of influence.

According to this hypothesis, citizens do not vote the rascals out because there is simply no other way to act. Corruption becomes 'a fact of life' [100]. So, what concerns voters is not the fact that corruption is ingrained in the political system but whether it produces positive externalities to the population at large or serves merely to enrich a small clique at the expense of everybody else. In this sense, the relationship between levels of government and tolerance of corruption becomes crucial.

The State and central government authorities are perceived as disproportionally powerful and inherently corrupt. The belief that all central governments are distant and insensitive to people's problems contrasts with the proximity and care of local politicians. In such a context, voters tend to tolerate corruption by those politicians that cater for their wellbeing, even if they do so at the expense of the State or by breaking the law [141]. The Portuguese saying *Rouba*, *mas faz* (he robs, but gets thing done)[1] is an illustration of the popular belief that politics should not be evaluated by what they ought to deliver and how they deliver it, but by the positive externalities of their policies to the populations at large. This suggests that 'voters make an informed trade-off when (re)electing corrupt politicians' [42]. This trade-off between efficacy for integrity, transparency or even legality, that voters make in the fulfilment of their basic needs, denotes a structural norm-conflict in their societies caused by a process of accelerated and intense modernisation.

According to Huntington [55], processes of modernisation cause a normative change in the dominant value system of society. The more accelerated and intense these changes are, the greater the likelihood of norm-conflict. As modernisation withers familistic norms and replaces them by a new set of standards in the public sphere (such as impartiality, transparency, accountability, integrity and legality), this process may not take place homogeneously across the population, leading, in some cases, to a weakening of collective consciousness. The coexistence of these conflicting value systems does not enable the development of collective moral costs to corruption thus facilitating its occurrence and tolerance in transition societies. In

[1] The expression was informally used for the first time, over 50 years ago, during the campaign of the Mayor and Governor of the City and State of São Paulo (Brazil), Adhemar de Barros.

such a context, individual needs, interests and passions are pursued without any moral constraint or collective imaginary of good governance.

The attempt to explain tolerance of corruption as the result of norm-conflict caused by modernisation ([71]: 72) is not new. Émile Durkheim ([35]) and later Robert Merton [88] reflected about the origin of crime in a similar way. Accordingly, corruption was interpreted as a symptom of a kind of social anomie, i.e. the absence of a clear and strong normative reference in society and the inadequacy of that value system to the aspirations of individuals.

They believe that power corrupts and all politicians are corrupt, hence it does not matter whom you vote, since there are no "clean" alternatives

Other possible explanation is that voters do not punish corruption at the ballot box, because they hold a pessimistic perception of politics. In a context of (perceived) widespread corruption, voters are either unable to identify "clean" alternatives or simply do not value alternation as a means of renewing the political class. Since they cannot value what they do not know or have never experienced, i.e. "clean government", they stick to the "normality of things": that power corrupts and all politicians are, by definition, corrupt.

Expressions such as political class, oligarchy, establishment, *nomenklatura* have become part of everyday public discourse in talking about political elites, and this is in itself revealing of the deterioration of the relationship between rulers and the ruled. The continuous explosion of corruption and collusion scandals involving political and business elites has broadened the representational gap between rulers and voters contributing to the de-legitimisation of representative political institutions, such as governments, parliaments and political parties. Politicians are not exempt from blame. As Yves Mény [86] points out, in denying the reality of significance of corruption, in accusing the press and the judiciary of plotting against the representatives of the people, and in involving their opponents in similar allegations, they have only contributed to worsen this trend of de-legitimisation by demonstrating that all, or nearly all, politicians are rotten.

This pessimistic conception of democratic politics and resignation to illegality goes hand in hand with the incapacity of the party system to produce candidates untouched by corruption allegations and the judicial authorities' poor record in condemning wrongdoers. Where corruption is perceived as a permanent feature of politics, it ceases to be an important variable for citizens in deciding their vote. As Rivero and Fernández-Vázquez [116] point out, citizens may believe the corruption allegations pending against the incumbent are sufficiently serious and truthful, but they continue supporting their Mayor because they consider the alternatives do not warrant a higher level of integrity.

They do not consider integrity as an electoral issue: parties and candidates get elected for their programmes and performance in office

According to this hypothesis, voters do not consider integrity as an electoral issue: they make their decisions based on electoral programmes and past performance in office concerning major policy issues. Citizens weigh corruption charges in their

voting decision against other factors. Voters believe the political agenda of the party matters more than the individual conduct of candidates.

The weakness of this hypothesis is that it ignores corruption as a policy issue, sometimes weighing higher in the voters' preferences than traditional bread and butter issues, such as unemployment, tax policy or the country's overall macroeconomic performance.

Moreover, it offers a pillarised perspective of retrospective voting. In voters' minds, the distinction between policy issues and their impacts is less clear-cut. At times of economic crisis, corruption not only becomes more sensitive in the public debate but it also becomes more easily associated with other social ills in the discursive rhetoric.

Concluding remarks

In some circumstances, voters support corrupt politicians. This behaviour not only contradicts the notion that democracy is a competitive process to choose "good" politicians as people's representatives but it also denotes that corruption is a symptom of a more general weakening of the ethical standards underpinning democratic rule.

The belief that free, fair, universal and competitive elections somehow lead to the choice of the fittest, and that these are by definition capable men with higher rectitude standards chosen amongst their peers, is a complete fallacy. Democracy and good governance do not necessarily go hand in hand. Many democracies are as corrupt as previous authoritarian regimes. The difference, however, resides in the capacity to choose and vote the rascals out.

According to democratic theory, citizens have the right and the possibility to judge their government retrospectively through the electoral process, and to reward or vote out the highest officials in government in a manner in which the use of coercion is comparatively uncommon. Historical and cross-country experiences tell us that such accountability mechanisms are rather imperfect in their functioning. As Mény [86] alerts, 'Wrong choices can be supported by the electorate and good leaders sanctioned for having made right ones'.

There are many structural factors that explain the persistence of a corrupt politician in power, such as the degree of concentration and personalisation of power, the manipulation of public opinion through the media or clientelism, the reduction of policy variations across electoral programmes, the difficulty to translate individual indignation into aggregate outcomes, etc. All these deficiencies condition choice. Not always are the "best", in the sense of more honest and capable, the chosen ones.

Electoral punishment of corruption is an imperfect accountability mechanism, but the real problem today is the widespread perception by the public that, in order to be successful in politics, one has to be corrupt. As pointed out by José-Maria Maravall [83]: 'Most of the time, democratic accountability and political success, both in elections and in office, are not easily compatible'.

Another paradoxical situation regarding electoral punishment of corruption is the fact that voters, weary of being cheated, vindicate themselves by voting against corrupt incumbents, rather than by favouring an ideology or programme. In doing so, voters are certainly aware of what they stand against, but uncertain of what they

stand for. By punishing corruption at the ballot box, voters send a strong signal to dishonest politicians; however, by singling out corruption as the most important issue of contention, instead of treating it in an integrated and comprehensive manner as one policy issue and part of a wider government programme, voters open the door to a spiral of populism that further impoverishes the policy space and pushes agenda setting to the margins.

Does corruption matter for a candidate's election or re-election? Most political scientists are still intrigued by what makes voters sometimes punish and in other circumstances condone or ignore the rectitude of their candidates. The literature on electoral punishment of corruption is still scarce. One obvious reason for this is the lack of comparable empirical evidence on corruption allegations, indictments and convictions regarding candidates across countries and over time. Although collecting court cases on candidates may be a difficult if not impossible quest in most countries, survey data may help us to explore and test theoretically grounded hypothesis. Most contributions in this collection have relied on survey data to test their hypotheses. Election expert assessments and audit reports also offer valuable information to understand the dynamics of electoral punishment.

In this special issue, we have adopted a multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of electoral punishment of corruption. Most macro-causal mechanisms have a micro-level rationale, and most individual-level features and reasons for punishing or condoling corruption at the ballot box are imbedded in the economic, social, cultural and institutional context in which individuals live. We have attempted to present a collection of contributions that illustrates the state of the art on electoral punishment, by including both single case and comparative analyseis, striking a balance between (quantitative as well as qualitative) empirical data and relevant, critical and audacious general theoretical questions/debates.

The special issue begins with a theoretical analysis of the problem of electoral punishment of corruption by Johnston, who tackles various political accountability paradoxes in liberal democracies, and gives some explanations as to why the expectation that voters might punish corrupt politicians at the ballot box is not guaranteed.

Using crime and electoral statistics, Stockemer and Calca discover that, in those Portuguese municipalities in which corruption is rampant, leading to several court cases, the voting turnout is higher than in those municipalities with none or fewer corruption cases. Contrary to what Stockemer et al. [133] had observed in a study of 72 democracies,[2] in the case of Portugal, corruption can be understood as a strong electoral mobilisation factor. In this special issue, Riera et al. suggest that corruption can determine to a great extent the amount of voters that stay at home on Election Day. Their article focuses on local-level elections, using post-electoral surveys for the Spanish case. They emphasise that corruption can have an impact on voting behaviour depending on a series of individual-level factors, such as partisanship, political interest, level of education and the employment situation. The type of elections is also a major determinant of electoral punishment. In the case of Greece, Kostantinidis and Xezonakis use a survey experiment with vignettes to explain tolerance towards corruption. The authors found that those corrupt politicians who deliver

[2] Kostadinova [65, 66] also claims that high levels of corruption reduce political participation.

measures that provide for the collective well-being of local populations are likely to continue enjoying voters' support. On the other hand, they demonstrate that neither clientelism nor partisanship have a strong explanatory value of electoral tolerance towards corruption in the country. In their contribution to this special issue, Sberna and Vannucci analyse how politicisation of information about judicial investigations on corruption can actually lead to greater electoral support for those involved. Political parties can develop different discursive strategies against anti-corruption activism and campaigns that allows them to maintain voters' support. In contrast, through a study of 32 European countries using 215 parliamentary elections, Bågenholm concludes in a more positive tone that, *grosso modo*, voters are likely to throw the rascals out in Europe.

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