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DOES FIGHTING CORRUPTION LEGITIMIZE A DECLINE IN DEMOCRACY?

An experimental field study on how corruption
affects democratic values in Mexico City

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Abstract

Recently, Mexico witnessed a historic election where Andrés López Obrador won the presidency in a landslide victory making him the most powerful president Mexico has seen in decades. With eradication of corruption at the top of his priority list in his attempt to transform the country, he indeed beholds a wide public support. However, experts have expressed doubtfulness about whether his methods are fully democratic. It appears that Mexico can be in the risk zone for what scholars have referred to as ‘democratic backsliding’. Although the literature on subject is comprehensive, there is a scarcity of studies that examine why these limitations of democracy often behold public support. This study draws on the literature on Quality of Government’s effect on satisfaction with, and support for, democracy, which finds that corruption has a statistically significant negative effect both on the satisfaction with, and the support for, democracy. Corruption is therefore in this study tested as a, in people’s opinions, legitimizing reason for the president to make restrictions in democracy. To examine this possible correlation, a quantitative survey experiment was conducted in Mexico City. The results of this study show a significant positive correlation; fighting corruption increases people’s willingness to compromise with democracy. This would mean that, in addition to affect the satisfaction with democracy, corruption erodes democratic values, making citizens willing to accept limitations of democracy in their own country.

Key words: democratic backsliding, quality of government, corruption, public support, Mexico

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1. Introduction

After being autocratically ruled by the same party for 70 years, the Mexican people had high hopes when Vicente Fox took over the presidency in year 2000 in what is considered the country's democratizing moment. But after almost 20 years of trying to consolidate democracy, the country still struggles: it is one of the most corrupt countries in the world (Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index, 2019); human rights are threatened; courts are malfunctioning due to corruption and pressured both by authorities and criminal organizations; media has been closely connected to the ruling party¹ and Mexico is considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world to work in as a journalist (Utrikesdepartementet, 2017: 9-10).

Although Mexico is a member of OECD and the world's 15th largest economy, poverty is widespread. Economic inequalities are sky high: only 43% of the population find themselves having a job (INEGI, 2019), and out of these, only 2,5% have a monthly income higher than \$700USD (García, 2018, August 21). Levels of violence keep reaching new all-time highs with 50,341 homicides and 861 femicides² in 2018 (Secretariado Ejecutivo, 2019). The number of missing people is more than 37,000 (Wilkinson, 2019, January 14), and the impunity for murder is as high as 98% (Utrikesdepartementet, 2017: 9). And when citizens try to migrate to improve their living conditions, they are met by a guarded boarder that they are willing to risk their lives to cross. The faith of democracy as the solution has faded as the system has been shown ineffective addressing the country's issues.

It is in the light of these events that the socialist grass root politician Andrés Lopez Obrador (AMLO) wins the presidency in July of 2018 with the grand promise to eradicate corruption as the central question of his election campaign (BBC News, 2018, July 2). In a land-slide victory he becomes the most powerful president Mexico has seen in decades (Krauze, 2018, December 2). And with an agenda based on the perspectives of the people, citizens trust him to be the one to change it all: to eradicate corruption, lower the economic inequalities, make education accessible for everyone and put an end to the war on drugs. To show that he is serious about being a new type of president he started his presidency by selling the government's private jet, cutting his own – and thousands of government officials, salary by

¹ The Revolutionary Institutional Party, PRI, that ruled over the country between 1929 and 2000, and again 2012–2018, have been closely connected with both TV Azteca and Televisa.

² The killing of women and girls because they are females, i.e. because of their gender (Femicide Watch, 2018).

40% and moving into the royal palace, where no president has lived for decades. He has also rearranged the national budget totally in his attempt to convince the public that this is a new era. It is time for what AMLO refers to as Mexico's forth transformation (Fuentes, 2018, November 26).

However, there are sceptical voices about his methods to accomplish all he wants to do during his six years as president (The Guardian, 2018, July 2). Is he really the democratic representative of the people that he says he is? His presidency so far does indeed inherent some doubtful actions. To fight corruption, for instance, he is centralizing the economic power by naming 'supervisors' from the own party to control how democratically elected governors spend their budgets. In some cases, these supervisors lost the election to the incumbents that they are now supposed to baby sit (Krauze, 2018, December 2). Promising to end the war on drugs, that this far only has increased the number of deaths since it was declared, he is creating a new national guard – a military group more loyal to the government than the corrupt police force. Daily, he goes on national television holding a speech to the nation, announcing the issues on the daily agenda. He holds minor referendums, called 'citizen consultations' to argue his decisions are backed up by public support, as was the case with the cancellation of Mexico City's new airport (BBC News, 2018, 29 October). And although he has sworn not to run for a second turn, he did repeal the law that, due to historic events, stated that presidents cannot be re-elected.

With the ambiguous methods of the new Mexican president it appears that Mexico can be in the risk zone of once again falling victim to limitations of democracy³. The president holds the strongest popular mandate in decades – but is this what citizens voted for? And more importantly, would limitations of democracy be supported by the people if the right reasons are presented?

AMLO has blamed corruption to be the evil force behind several of the country's problems and he won many votes by putting eradicating corruption at the top of his priority list. Corruption is indeed seen as one of the most severe problems in the country by its citizens (Latinobarómetro, 2017: 5) and according to Transparency International (2019), the inability to control corruption is "contributing to a crisis in democracy around the world". With numbers as high as 79% of Mexicans being dissatisfied with democracy and less than 40%

³ The study will not make any speculations about Mexico's future. The study will solely address peoples' *attitudes* towards hypothetical actions.

considering democracy to be preferable to any other system (Latinobarómetro, 2017: 9-7), it is not unlikely that restrictions of democracy might be supported. Can citizens consider fighting corruption to be a legitimate reason to restrict democracy?

2. Previous research and theoretical approach

It appears that Mexico can be in the risk zone of what scholars have referred to as ‘democratic backsliding’. Therefore, this chapter explores the existing literature on the subject, followed by possible explanations to why limitations in democracy receive public support. Thereafter, the theoretical approach is presented in a literature review of the Quality of Government’s effect on citizens’ satisfaction with, or support for, democracy.

2.1. Democratic Backsliding

The world is witnessing a global trend of democratic recession where Hungary, Poland, Philippines, Venezuela, Bolivia and Brazil all constitute examples of countries that have experienced a gradual setback in terms of democracy. In a study by Lührmann and Lindberg (2019: 9) it is found that 2017 was the first year since 1940 where more countries experiences autocratization than democratization, implying that (following Samuel Huntington’s democratization waves, 1991) the third wave of autocratization is here. If democracy is in global decline, assessing the reasons and finding the cure for this should be of grand interest amongst scholars in political science.

The terminology of the phenomena of democratic recession is contentious and a subject of discussion in the literature (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019: 5). Amongst others, it is commonly referred to as ‘democratic backsliding’ (Bermeo, 2016), ‘illiberal backlash’ (Hunter & Power, 2019), ‘authoritarian backsliding’ (Dresden & Howard, 2016) and ‘autocratization’ (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019). In this study, the term ‘democratic backsliding’ will be used as this work largely is based on concepts presented in the work of Nancy Bermeo (2016). Additionally, I will argue that weakening and strengthening of democratic principles can occur simultaneously in a country; in different sectors or geographical places. Therefore, democratic backsliding can occur without a setback in the country’s democracy more generally, i.e. autocratization.

Bermeo (2016: 16) defines democratic backsliding as “the weakening or disassembling of a *given* set of democratic institutions”. The form of democratic recession that we see today differs from the classic coup d’état and election-day vote frauds committed by regime outsiders which were common during and recently after the Cold War. Today we see existing incumbents using less obvious and more long-term methods; resulting in a more gradual process of democratic recession (Bermeo, 2016: 6; Hanley & Vachudova, 2018: 278). This form of democratic backsliding is manifested through democratic institutions and legal channels, often with public support (Bermeo, 2016: 11). One common tool for limiting democracy is ‘executive aggrandisement’, through which the executive power tends to concentrate the political and economic power by undermining institutional checks and balances. Executive aggrandisement can be targeting the media, court and judiciary, state-owned companies and agencies, educational and cultural institutions, and election regulations (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018: 278-9).

Although the trend of democratic backsliding has been met with resistance in all countries concerned, a large proportion of the countries’ citizens seem either to support, or at least tolerate these restrictions of democracy. And although the literature on democratic backsliding is comprehensive, there is a scarcity of research that address *why* citizens tolerate leaders that restrict their democratic rights. What the existing research says is discussed below.

Robert Kagan (2015) argues that human beings “do not yearn only for freedom, autonomy, individuality, and recognition”, but they also yearn for “comfort, security, order, and importantly, a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves”. These characteristics are referred to as reasons to why citizens may support autocratic regimes, as they can be seen as more actionable and effective in their decision making.

Guy Standing (2011) presents the idea of the ‘precariat’, a new social class that has grown out of the uncertainty in the neoliberal economical system. According to Standing, the old party system (classical left and right) does not capture the interests of the precariat, making them open to listen to populist politicians for voicing and promising to address their grievances.

Bermeo (2016: 16) lifts the example of marginalized groups who want institutional change as a part of demanding a more inclusive and responsive democratic model which can end up leading to democratic backsliding. This kind of democratic backsliding can be hard to see as

these groups have a democratic agenda. An example of this is Bolivia, where Evo Morales won the election 2005 with great promises of changing the country to be more inclusive and representative of its wide indigenous population. Fourteen years later, he still holds the presidency, changed the constitution against the will of the people and is running for a fourth term.

Diskin, Diskin and Hazan (2005: 304) find that factors like presidentialism, proportionality, constitutional weakness, cleavages, a malfunctioning economy, unfavourable history, fragmentation, polarization, governmental instability, and foreign involvement are related to the probability of 'democratic collapse'. The most important factors were societal: social cleavages, a malfunctioning economy and unfavourable history, where 'unfavourable history' refers to 'countries with undemocratic or mixed backgrounds' (ibid: 294). They also stress the importance of that no single factor on its own will cause a democratic collapse, but that it is rather a combination of various determinants (ibid: 304).

Bermeo (2016) focuses her analysis on *how* democracies break down, i.e. through which channels democratic backsliding occurs. She argues that the kind of events that can lead to democratic backsliding do not have to be undemocratic themselves but are rather a part of a bigger process. That these single events can be hard to distinguish might be one of the reasons that scholars have not yet put their focus on why citizens often tolerate, or even support, such actions. At the same time, Bermeo (2016: 16) stresses the importance of addressing what it is that motivates citizens to support actions that might lead to a gradual democratic backsliding. Although she argues that every country has different experiences, I will argue that isolating single variables to identify whether they might be contributing factors for citizens' support is of academic interest.

Although existing literature offer some possible explanations to why democratic backsliding often occurs with public support, these explanations are theoretical rather than empirically tested. It is therefore argued that a study examining empirical evidence should be of high relevance.

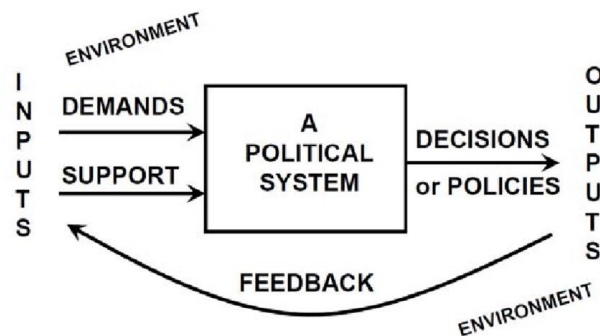
2.2. Theoretical Approach

In this section, the importance of Quality of Government and the effects of corruption in a democratic system are presented, introducing corruption as a variable that affects the citizens' satisfaction with, and support for, democracy.

2.2.1. *Quality of Government's effect on democratic support and satisfaction*

The theoretical framework examines, drawing on the Eastonian model (see figure 1 below), the effects of the output side of the political system on regime legitimacy and satisfaction with democracy. Easton (1957: 387) presents a model of the political system that inherent the input side – where public demands and support is formed and expressed, e.g. through voting, and the output side – where policies are created and performed by public officials.

Figure 1.



According to Lipset (1959: 86), legitimacy is the capacity of maintaining “the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate or proper ones for the society”, and lack, or low levels, of legitimacy has been frequently used as an explanation for the collapse of regimes (Gjefsen, 2012: 1). Therefore, legitimacy is vital for a political system’s ability to survive.

In the literature of political legitimacy, focus has shifted from exclusively searching for explanatory variables for political legitimacy on the input side of the political system, arguing that electoral democracy and representativity in institutions are the creators of political legitimacy (Norris, 1997; Lijphart, 1999). Nowadays, there is a growing literature arguing that political legitimacy is created at the output side of the political system (Norris, 2012; Gjefsen, 2012; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2013). Although explanatory variables to political legitimacy are to be found in both the input and the output side of the political system (Dahlberg, Linde and Holmberg, 2013: 23), this work will focus on the output side, i.e. Quality of Government.

Rothstein and Teorell (2008: 170) describes Quality of Government as impartiality in the exercise of public authority. The more exact definition of impartiality they use, borrowed from Strömberg (2000), is: “When implementing laws and policies, government officials shall not take into consideration anything about the citizens/ case that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the law”. Absence of corruption is often seen as a pivotal role of impartiality (Dahlberg, Linde, Holmberg, 2013: 8), but impartiality also rules out clientelism, patronage, nepotism, political favouritism and discrimination (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008: 171). Due to the rhetoric of the Mexican president and because of its more common term, corruption will be the focus of this study. Hence, the concept of Quality of Government may be used, but when so it refers more than anything to corruption.

The next section will focus on the literature that examines the relationship between Quality of Government and regime legitimacy or satisfaction with democracy. The literature on regime legitimacy, regime support and satisfaction with democracy are all taken into consideration as they are connected and because of that lack of either one of them might threaten democracy (Weitz-Shapiro, 2008: 288). Although the literature is rather united on that Quality of Government does affect the satisfaction with democracy, it is more uncertain if this refers to satisfaction with democracy as political system or support for *how* democracy works in practice, the latter argued by (Linde & Ekman, 2003: 391; Stockemer & Sundström, 2013: 144). However, Easton (1975: 444) argues that these two aspects most likely are to affect each other. For instance, long-term dissatisfaction within a democratic regime might affect citizens’ support for democratic principles (Stockemar & Sundström, 2013: 144; Weitz-Shapiro 2008: 288). Hence, results from earlier studies might be presented as ‘satisfaction with democracy’, ‘regime support’ or ‘regime legitimacy’, where all are thought to be variables that can affect the support for democracy as form of government.

Dahlberg, Linde and Holmberg (2013) examine so called ‘dissatisfied democrats’ using data from Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. Dissatisfied democrats refer to citizens that think democracy is the preferable to any other system but dissatisfied with the way that democracy works in practice. When testing whether factors on the input or the output side of the political system creates dissatisfied democrats, they find that both subjective representation and government performance have important impact on the satisfaction with democracy (ibid: 17). However, government performance – measured by impartial bureaucracy and low corruption, has a substantially stronger effect on individual satisfaction

with democracy than what individual perceptions of being represented – measured by congruence with national politicians, had.

Stockemer and Sundström (2013: 137-139) find that corruption decreases satisfaction with democracy. They also find that individual perceptions of petty corruption have a larger effect on satisfaction with democracy than aggregated macro-level corruption.

Anderson and Tverdova (2003) analyse the effect of corruption, measured by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (1996) and citizens' satisfaction with democracy and trust in civil servants (data from the International Social Survey Program) in 16 new and old democracies. They find that citizens living in corrupt countries are less satisfied with democracy and trust public officials less compared to citizens living in less corrupt countries.

Wagner, Schneider & Halla (2008) examine the effect of the quality of institutions and satisfaction with democracy in Western Europe. They find, controlling for various variables, that better rule of law, low corruption, a smaller shadow economy, less regulated political executive recruitment, less regulation of political participation, and better checks and balances all are associated with higher degrees of satisfaction with democracy (p. 31). The largest effect they find is control of corruption (p. 36).

Gjefsen (2012) finds quite strong support for that Quality of Government (where corruption is a central part) has a stronger effect on regime legitimacy (definition: "the support citizens give their regime based on a moral conviction that it has a right to rule, and that it serves a common good".) than the process of electoral democracy. He states that "this finding suggests that efficient and impartial government institutions, characterized by low levels of corruption and discrimination, could be the main source of legitimacy for many regimes and that a lack of such institutions is a likely cause of legitimacy crisis and regime instability" (p. 79).

Seligson (2002) examines the impact of exposure to corruption on regime legitimacy in four Latin American countries (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Paraguay), using survey data for both independent and dependent variable. He finds that, controlling for socioeconomic, demographic and partisan identification, that exposure to corruption erodes belief in the political system and reduces interpersonal trust. (p. 408). Seligson, in comparison to other studies, examines the effect of exposure to corruption rather than perceptions of corruption. The data he uses is International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS).

Canache and Allison (2005) analyse WVS data from several Latin American countries and find that corruption (CPI) has a negative effect on the support for the incumbent government. They do not find a significant correlation between perceptions of corruption and support for democratic principles (p.106). However, they state that it is unlikely that this can continue indefinitely, meaning that long-term corruption might eventually affect the support for democratic principles. They go so far as, in line with Seligson (2002), suggesting that due to the widespread corruption in Latin America, the democracy in this region might be racing against the clock.

Dahlberg and Holmberg (2014) examine how citizens' satisfaction with democracy is affected by system factors from both the input-side (electoral democracy) and output-side (Quality of Government) of the political system. They find that government effectiveness in form of impartial and effective bureaucracies have a stronger effect on citizens' satisfaction with democracy than representational devices as ideological congruence. Further, they state that citizens generally can differentiate between different levels of regime, giving support to democratic values while at the same time being critical towards how a democratic government works in practice (p. 518). Their study is limited to 32 European parliamentary democracies, using both individual data from CSES (1996-2011) and data on governmental institutions from the Quality of Government institute (impartiality, professionalism and rule of law) and from the World Bank (government effectiveness).

The literature, examining different countries and using different data, shows unanimous results on that low Quality of Government and corruption negatively affects the satisfaction with democracy. However, there is an uncertainty if low Quality of Government only affects satisfaction with how democracy works in practice or support for the democratic system as such. Even though the former is frequently argued (Linde & Ekman, 2003: 391; Stockemer & Sundström, 2013: 144), the long-term risks of dissatisfaction with democracy is that eventually it might lead to a lowered support for democracy as form of government (Easton, 1975; Seligson, 2002; Canache & Allison, 2005). By examining whether fighting corruption justifies actions that restrict democratic principles, this study will contribute to this literature by testing whether corruption, in addition to affecting satisfaction with the way democracy works, also affects the support for democracy as a political system, making citizens willing to compromise with democratic principles.

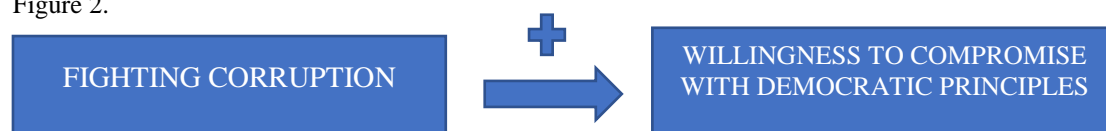
3. Objective and Research question

The objective of this study is to examine whether citizens can support actions that restrict democratic principles if the reason for this is to reduce corruption. The study will contribute to the existing scholarly on democratic backsliding, as it tests fighting corruption as an explanatory variable of why citizens support actions and leaders that restrict democratic principles. In discovering what makes people willing to support antidemocratic actions, knowledge on how to improve democracy itself is obtained. The study will also contribute to the work on support for and satisfaction with democracy, as it will show whether dissatisfaction with democracy can imply that citizens might be willing to compromise with democratic principles.

The more specific research question this study aims to answer is: *“Can fighting corruption, in citizens’ minds, legitimize political actions that restrict democracy?”*.

The hypothesis is that fighting corruption will lead to a higher willingness to compromise with democratic principles (see figure 2). The causal mechanism is thought to be failed expectations: when the democratic system fails to deliver desired results, i.e. reduce corruption, people will lose faith in the system as solution to the problem. When conventional politicians – representing democracy – during a longer time have promised to reduce the levels of corruption using democratic methods and failed, the levels of trust will decrease for not only the individual politicians but also for democracy itself. This decreased trust, or support with democracy might drive citizens to support alternative solutions, e.g. politicians that presents alternative solutions to the problem. Hence, governmental failure to address a problem affecting its citizens might lead to lowered support for democracy, and therefore a willingness to accept restrictions in democratic principles in order to solve the problem.

Figure 2.



4. Research design

In this chapter, the research design is presented and discussed. A single case study was chosen as no existing data measuring this correlation was found. Due to the limitations of the project, creating measurements and collecting data in more than one country would not have been possible. Thereto, the aim with the study is to find out *if* citizens might be willing to compromise with democratic principles to fight corruption. A comparison between countries would include a prediction that this is the case.

Mexico was chosen as analysis unit due to that the country may be in the risk zone for democratic backsliding. That restrictions of democracy have not yet been made in Mexico is seen as an advantage because it gives an opportunity to measure citizens' attitudes towards these kinds of actions *before* they are a fact. This is seen upon as an advantage because the aim with the study is to examine whether corruption can lead to a decline in public support for democracy, making citizens willing to compromise with democratic principles to fight corruption. For obvious reasons, this is harder to examine in a country where democratic backsliding already occurred: citizens will by then have seen the effects of the restrictions of democracy and their answers would be based on these outcomes rather than their willingness to compromise with democracy to fight corruption. Depending on the limitations of freedom in such a country, it could also have been unsafe both for respondents and the investigator. Even if democratic backsliding turns out not to take place in Mexico, the study will provide findings on whether fighting corruption by citizens can be seen upon as a legitimate reason to restrict democratic principles.

As Mexico is a country with 129 million⁴ inhabitants (World Bank, 2019), it is impossible to get a geographical representative selection group of the country within the time of project. Therefore, the study is geographically limited to be performed in the capital Mexico City, which constitutes the political, financial and cultural centre of the country.

The possibilities to generalize the results of this study may be discussed. Even though the selection group might not be representative of the population, it is by Diskin, Diskin and Hazan (2005: 294) found that the most important factors of a country in the risk zone for democratic recession are social cleavages, a malfunctioning economy and countries with undemocratic or mixed background. Due to the similar situation and history between Mexico

⁴ Measured 2017

and several other Latin American countries, this there implies that the results *might be*, but not necessarily will be, generalizable to similar countries in the region.

5. Methodology: data and measurements

In this chapter, operationalizations of variables is presented, followed by a presentation and discussion of the choice of method for data collecting and the analytical tools. Thereafter, selection of respondents, execution of the surveys and ethical considerations are discussed.

5.1. Operationalizations of variables

The study aims to examine if there is a causal correlation between the independent variable “*fighting corruption*” and the dependent variable “*increased willingness to compromise with democratic principles*”.

- “*Fighting corruption*” is operationalized as “*reduce corruption*” as the objective of fighting corruption is to reach lower levels of corruption.
- “*Willingness to compromise with democratic principles*” is operationalized by measuring attitudes towards a series of actions that restrict different democratic principles.

5.2. Survey experiment

The study was performed through a quantitative survey experiment. Using an experimental method implies creating variation of the independent variable by randomizing the participants into different groups; the control group and the experiment group(s). This way, as the groups are ought to be similar in all other ways but the independent variable (because the randomisation process will make sure of this), a difference in the result between the control group and the experiment group can be concluded to depend on the difference in the given information, which is an operationalization of the independent variable. For this reason, experiments are commonly used when testing causal hypotheses (Esaiasson et al., 2017: 338), as is the case with the research question in this study.

Two different versions of surveys were handed out; one version to the control group (coded 0) and another version to the experiment group (coded 1). The surveys consisted of the same statements regarding presidential actions that restrict democracy and the respondents were

asked to answer how much they agree with the statements on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 represented ‘strongly disagree’, and 7 represented ‘strongly agree’. The difference was that the experiment group was provided with the information that the *reason* for these restrictive actions was to reduce corruption. The given reason of ‘reduce corruption’ is therefore the ‘treatment’ of the experiment, which is the operationalization of the independent variable. Because only the experiment group gets the treatment, a difference in the result between the control group and the experiment group is expected. *If* a difference in the result between the groups is obtained, it is probable that the reason of reducing corruption, in citizens’ opinions, legitimize presidential actions that restrict democracy. Due to that the control group measures the ‘usual’ willingness to compromise with the same democratic principles, these would be restrictions that the respondents *would usually not tolerate*. Therefore, it is tested if fighting corruption *increases* the willingness to compromise with democratic principles. The advantage of using this method is its ability to isolate the independent variable as the only possible cause of a difference in the results between the control and the experiment group.

The hypothesis implies that respondents in the experiment group will show a higher willingness to let the president undermine democratic principles, as the reason for these actions is to reduce corruption. It is hypothesized that *more of the treatment* – version 0 → version 1 – will create *more willingness* to compromise with democratic principles; a higher mean value on the ‘agreeing’-scale going from 1 to 7.

5.2.1. Survey Design

This section presents how the surveys were designed; what background questions that are chosen, what democratic principles the statements build on and which question that is used as randomisation check. To exclude misunderstandings due to language barriers, the surveys were written in Spanish. The different versions of the surveys are designed identically – except from the treatment which only exists in the experiment version. The surveys are presented in the Appendix.

Background questions

As background questions, the surveys build on earlier studies that examine satisfaction with democracy. Seligson (2002) and Stockemer and Sundström (2013) use two demographic

indicators; 'gender' and 'age', and two socioeconomic ones; 'education' and 'income'⁵. In addition to these four questions, a fifth question about the level of the education of the respondents' parents was added as a backup question if respondents would choose not to expose their income level as this can be a sensitive question. Information about the education level of their parents helps finding out something about their socioeconomic situation.

In earlier studies, the found effect of these individual characteristics varies. Generally, higher income correlates to satisfaction with democracy (Stockemer & Sundström, 2013: 146), but Seligson (2002: 424) finds mixed results in his study, where income is found to have both a significant positive and a negative correlation with support for democracy in different countries. Education has been found to have a positive effect on satisfaction with democracy (Stockemer & Sundström, 2013; Anderson & Tverdova, 2003), but Seligson (2002) finds a negative effect on the support for democracy. Male gender is found to have a significant positive correlation to satisfaction (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2013, Anderson & Tverdova, 2003) and support for democracy (Seligson, 2002). Age has shown a significant positive correlation to satisfaction in some studies (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2013), but remain insignificant in other (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003), whereas Seligson (2002) finds that young citizens show a higher level of support.

Although the research is somewhat conflicting, these factors are found to affect the results in the studies. Therefore, they will be used not only to map differences in attitudes between different characteristics, but also as control variables to reveal possible spurious correlations, i.e. correlation that depend on characteristics in the background questions rather than the treatment.

As earlier research has shown that exposure to petty corruption affects respondents' satisfaction with democracy negatively (Seligson, 2002), a question about if the respondents have been exposed to corruption during the last 12 months is included as control variable. This is placed as the final question to not affect the answers in the control group.

⁵ The income levels are based on Mexico's National Institute of Statics and Geography's UMA-index (INEGI, 2019).

Randomisation question

Randomisation check is an important feature of experimental studies with the objective to control if the randomization process worked, making sure that there are no significant differences in aspects that are not affected by the treatment between the groups (Esaiasson, 2017: 343-344). The randomisation check question in the surveys measured how well respondents think they understand the most political issues of the country. The question is chosen because a difference in political understanding is thought affect the results of the indicators of the dependent variable. The question is tested in a regression analysis between the versions of the surveys to make sure that there is not any significant difference between the groups.

Treatment questions

The questions that constitute indicators for the dependent variable are formulated as various statements where presidential actions that restrict democratic principles are presented. These democratic principles build on the principles of 'Polyarchy' by Robert Dahl (1979) and indicators of democracy used by the 'Varieties of Democracy Institute' (V-dem, 2019). However, as not all indicators can make part of the study, a consideration of which democratic principles to include had to be made. This decision builds on the literature on Democratic Backsliding, where it is accounted for which democratic principles that populist and non-democratic leaders tend to restrict (see Bermeo, 2016). Democratic principles that are included are freedom of expression, freedom of organization and association; as well as actions that restrict the opposition or the rule of law. In addition, questions about democratic principles as such and democracy as political system are included.

Inspiration for creating the questions was gathered from well-known national and international surveys such as World Value Survey, Latinobarómetro, LAPOP and ENCUP, and the questions are formulated to resemble to the questions about corruption and democracy used in these established surveys. Some questions are similar to the ones used in the research about satisfaction with democracy: one measures to which degree the respondents agree with that democracy is the best form of political system and one measures their satisfaction with the democracy in the country (used in LAPOP, Latinobarómetro, World Value Survey and ENCUP).

The questions in the surveys are formulated as statements where it is suggested that the president should have the power to execute actions that he normally does not have the power to do as these actions restrict democratic principles. The questions in the experiment group provides the reason of ‘to reduce corruption’ for these actions whereas the control group is provided with ‘under some circumstances’. To give an idea of the formulation of the surveys, an example is presented in figure 3 below:

Figure 3.

Control group (0):
 Under some circumstances,
 an authoritarian government can
 be preferable to a democratic one

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1 = Strongly disagree
 7= Strongly agree

Experiment group (1):
 Under some circumstances,
 for example to reduce corruption,
 an authoritarian government can
 be preferable to a democratic one

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5.2.2. Implications of the choice of method

A quantitative method is chosen due to that the aim of the study is to grasp if the attitudes presumed in the hypothesis are recurring generally in the society. The goal is to capture the opinions of a larger group of average Mexican citizens. For this reason, a quantitative study is to prefer over a qualitative one. *If*, however, the result of the study does show a willingness to compromise with democratic principles to fight corruption, further studies should focus more on understanding *why* these attitudes exist. In this case, qualitative methods as respondent or informant interviews would be preferable.

Several alternative methods were considered, amongst them quantitative surveys. This method would have made it possible to reach out to a wider public as less preparations are needed, making the result more generalizable. However, as there are no earlier studies that examine the correlation of the hypothesis in this thesis, the results of quantitative studies would have been difficult to analyse as there is no existing comparison point. In an experiment a clear comparison point is made through the randomisation into two groups.

Another type of experiment was also considered in the decision of method; a vignette experiment where respondents reads an information text in the beginning and then answers

some questions that measures attitudes. However, the experimental method for the study is chosen for its advantages to separately examine several indicators of democratic principles.

This does not mean that experimental surveys can pass without criticism. Criticism is often directed to doubtful operationalizations (Esaiasson et al., 2017: 342), and this study is no exception. The treatment of the experiment could have been formulated in various ways but the formulation of ‘reduce corruption’ is considered to be close to the independent variable ‘fight corruption’. Criticism can also be directed to the formulation of the questions in the surveys as there are numerous ways to formulate survey questions. It is therefore recognized that the formulations of the questions are not flawless. Which democratic principles that are chosen can also be discussed, but the ones included are considered to be useful indicators that are built on well-established research, although this does not exclude that others could have been integrated as well.

Another problem might be that only the experiment group is given a reason to *why* the democratic principles need to be compromised. However, the thought is that the control group will provide a measurement of the general values of democracy – what presidential actions people accept, whereas the experiment group is thought to measure whether there is a difference *when* the reason of fighting corruption is given. This would mean that citizens’ perceives corruption as a problem to the extent that they are willing to compromise with their personal values to reduce it, meaning that they perceive actions that restrict democratic principles are *wrong*, but when they are performed to reduce corruption they can be seen as a “necessary evil”. A solution to this could have been to create several experiment groups, making it possible to include various treatments and thereby compare if also other variables increases the willingness to fight corruption. However, this is not done because the statistical power of the study is prioritized.

5.3. Analytical methods

Bi- and multivariate regression analyses are the used analytical methods to test the treatment’s effect on respondents’ willingness to compromise with democratic principles. A mean value of all the indicators measuring the dependent variable is created to capture the more general willingness to compromise with democratic principles. Thereafter, each dependent indicator is tested separately to see how the results differ between different indicators, illuminating which democratic principles that citizens are most respectively least willing to compromise with. If

the hypothesis is supported, the mean value in the experiment group should be higher than in the control group. The correlations are also tested under control for the variables accounted for in the section with background questions.

5.4. Pilot Study

This section constitutes a presentation of a performed Pilot study, followed by what insights and knowledges it provided to the final study.

According to Esaiasson et al. (2017: 339), performing a Pilot study is desirable as an experimental study omits the possibility to redo earlier parts of the thesis after the study is performed, such as research questions. It also provides the possibility to test the treatment and see if respondents react as predicted (ibid: 342). Thereby, better possibility to calculate the statistical power of the results of the study is obtained, which facilitates calculating the number of respondents required for the final study.

The Pilot study was performed online, using existing contacts from different parts of Mexico. They were asked to participate in a bachelor thesis study by answering a survey online. 77 replied surveys were obtained. The results imply that the mean value of the indicators measuring the dependent variable does have a positive correlation between the versions of the surveys. This means that the experiment group were more willing to compromise with democratic principles than the control group. However, this result was not statistically significant. When tested separately, 5 of 6 indicators showed a positive correlation but only one was significant.

The statistical power was calculated using a Sample Size Calculator (<https://clincalc.com/Stats/SampleSize.aspx>) with the result that the correlations are not likely to have been created by chance. As the respondents of the Pilot-version were 77, the minimum of acquired replies in the final study is set to 120 as this is the number mentioned by Esaiasson et al. (2017: 346). To ensure that number of 120 was reached, 160 surveys were handed out.

To test how respondents reacted to answer questions about democracy and corruption – which is sensitive – other questions were integrated in the surveys of the Pilot-version. However, the received response about these questions made it possible to exclusively focus on indicators

measuring the dependent variable in the final version. Thereto, a few other changes were made in the final versions of the surveys to optimize the study.

5.5. Selection of Respondents

According to Esaiasson et al. (2017: 345), discretionary selection of respondents is justified when performing experiments, as experimental scientists give the process of recruitment less importance for the quality of the study. However, the selection will affect the possibility to generalize the results of the selection group to a wider population. To get a variation of respondents, the most effective way was considered to perform the study in parts of the city centre that are characterized by a lot of movement with people from all over the city.

Therefore, the study was executed in the parts of the Zócalo, Plaza de la República and Paseo de la Reforma which are all parts of the city centre that attract people from different areas.

Although the academic goal of representativity is not met, a variation of respondents in the selection group was achieved. However, the problem of selection bias remains as there might be certain groups that are not found in these areas although they inherent a great variation of people, e.g. people from low socioeconomic classes and women. As respondents themselves decide if they want to participate in the study, personal experiences also affect, for example; if they themselves or anyone they know have performed a study; earlier experiences with foreigners; earlier experience with surveys performed by the government. Metro stations were also considered but excluded due to personal security. The surveys' background questions regarding gender, age, level of education and income contributes with information about the respondents, making it possible to observe under- or overrepresented characteristics.

Another possible problem is 'social desirability bias', which refers to that respondents might not answer the questions honestly as they think that their opinions lie outside the norm. As democracy as form of government is considered the global constitutive norm (Lynch, 2007: 701), respondents might not be honest about their opinions as they want to be part of this norm. However, looking at earlier surveys examining the support for democracy in Mexico, as much as 21% of respondents say that "sometimes an authoritarian government can be preferable to democratic one" and 42% that "democracy is dangerous because it might cause problems" (ENCUP, 2012). This indicates that people are at least partly honest, lowering the risk of social desirability bias. Although there is no way to control social desirability bias in the results, we can assume that it is similar for different selection groups.

5.6. Data Collecting

A pre-randomisation of the order in which the surveys were handed out was made in Excel, making sure the allocation to control respectively experiment group were randomly assigned. The surveys were pre-marked in a corner with (0) for the control group and (1) to the experiment group, making it easy to identify which version of the survey the respondent had if they had any questions. The data was collected during a period of ten days and, to my knowledge, no mayor political event that could have had an important effect on the results happened during this period.

As the data collecting was done in crowded parts of the city, with most people rushing by, it was impossible asking everyone if they would like to participate. To create a systematic approach, all people who were sitting down were asked to participate in a study for a bachelor thesis performed at a University in Sweden. They were informed that the study was anonymous, that they could skip any questions that they were not comfortable with and that the objective with the results is to present them in the thesis. The only requirements were that participants were Mexicans and over 16 years old.

5.7. Ethical considerations

As corruption can be a sensitive subject, one of the objectives with the Pilot study was to see how respondents reacted when they were asked questions about corruption. Therefore, the Pilot study included questions not measuring the dependent variable to distribute the focus of the survey between different subject. Afterwards, respondents were asked to leave a comment on the study, where no negative response about offensiveness in the questions were received.

Talking to Mexicans it becomes clear quickly that they do not get offended when asked about opinions on corruption. This is also manifested when looking at earlier studies about corruption and democracy in Mexico (ENCUP, 2012; LAPOP; Latinobarómetro, 2017). Thereto, the surveys were discussed with a professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico before executed.

As mentioned above, the respondents are informed that they are anonymous and that they can skip any questions they are not comfortable answering. To make it extra clear, two questions that are considered to be sensitive are marked with the option ‘prefer not to answer’, making it extra clear that these questions are not obligatory.

5.9. Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are two central concepts of quantitative research. Validity refers to whether the study measures what it intends to measure whereas reliability refers to accuracy in the measuring, meaning a different researcher would reach the same result if using the same data (Esaiasson, 2017: 58-66).

This study is considered to have satisfying validity as the operationalisations of variables are considered to measure the attitudes they intend to measure. However, the study measures subjective attitudes which exclusively build on what the respondents choose to answer in that exact moment. Therefore, answers can be inconstant and changeable as they might be influenced by contextual bias (Ott, 2011: 5). This can refer to what news the respondent has read recently or something the respondent has recently discussed, or even the weather or un what mood the respondents is in that day.

The statistical power is tested to ensure the reliability in the results. Thereto, since the data was collected personally, I can be sure of that the used data is correct. To avoid errors, the results have been carefully downloaded, recoded and tested in STATA at two different times, showing the same results.

6. Results

In this chapter the results of the study are presented and analysed. First, characteristics of the selection group are presented and analysed, followed by bivariate and multivariate regression analyses of the dependent variable.

Out of the 160 copies of the surveys that were handed out to people willing to participate, 152 were answered correctly and therefore possible to include in the study. As participants were told that they could choose to skip any question they were not comfortable with answering, there are surveys with some questions unanswered included in the analysis. However, surveys in which the question used as randomisation control were not answered are not included in the analysis as this would counteract the idea of having a question for randomisation control. In other excluded surveys, several boxes were marked on the same question.

6.1. General observations

In this section, characteristics of the respondents will be presented. It is also tested if there is any significant difference in these characteristics between the control and experiment group

and finally, the background questions' effect on the dependent variable (measured in a mean value of all indicators on the dependent variable) is tested. The answers on the background questions and the randomisation control question are presented in table 1.

6.1.1. Characteristics of respondents

The randomisation check question that measures subjective political knowledge shows no significant difference between the control and experiment group, meaning that the randomization process worked. This is crucial for the results of the study as any significance here could mean that there are systematic differences between the groups that may affect the results. However, as this question does have a small (but also this one insignificant) effect on the dependent variable, it is included as control variable.

Out of 152 respondents, 58% were men and 40% were women. That more men than women participated is probably explained by that there are generally more men than women out on the streets in Mexico. There is a significant difference between the control and experiment group, which might affect the results as earlier research has found that men generally are more satisfied with democracy than women (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2013; Anderson & Tverdova, 2003), and have a higher support for democracy (Seligson, 2002). In this study, women also show higher willingness to compromise with democratic principles than men. Although this study does not show any statistical significance, it is shown that there is a connection between gender and being dissatisfied with and willing to compromise with democracy. This probably depends on that women traditionally have been more excluded from the political life and therefore feel less represented.

The majority of respondents were young, with 77% being under 40. This overrepresentation of young people is thought to depend on older peoples' scepticism to answer the survey when asked, in combination with less old people being out on the streets. There is no significant difference between the control and experiment group but being older has a significant negative effect on the willingness to compromise with democracy. This is in line with the research on satisfaction with democracy (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2013), whereas it opposes the results that Seligson (2002) found in other Latin American countries.

55% of the respondents have a university degree or are currently enrolled. This means that there is an overrepresentation of well-educated people in the study as the national average of Mexicans with a university degree is 22% (OECD, 2017), although this number probably is higher in Mexico City. There is no significant difference between the control and experiment

group, but education has clearly the largest effect on the dependent variable, where more education is shown to lead to less willingness to compromise with democratic principles. This finding is in line with earlier research, where it is found that education has a positive effect on the satisfaction with democracy (Stockemer & Sundström, 2013; Anderson & Tverdova, 2003). However, this also opposes the study of Seligson (2002) where education is found to have a negative effect on the support for democracy.

Level of education of the respondents' parents have both significant differences between the control and experiment group (mother's education) and significant effect on the dependent variable (father's education).

Looking at wages, 34% of respondents earn more than 5 minimum wages. In an article it is stated that only 13% of employees in Mexico City earn more than 5 minimum wages (García, 2018, August 21), which means that there is an overrepresentation of people who earn above the average in this study. Although there is no significant difference between the respondent groups, income has a significant effect on the dependent variable.

Finally, 55% of the respondents answer that they have been exposed to a corrupt action in the last 12 months. In a study by Seligson (2002), it is found that exposure to corruption has a negative effect on the support for democracy. In this study, however, exposure to corruption has a negative effect (although not significant) on the dependent variable, meaning that exposure to corruption does not lead to higher willingness to compromise with democratic principles.

Table 1.

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS		ALL RESPONDENTS	CONTROL GROUP	EXPERIMENT GROUP	DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GROUPS*	EFFECT ON DEPENDENT VARIABLE
GENDER MALE CODED 1 FEMALE CODED 2	MALE	58%	68%	48%	0.196*	0.208
	FEMALE	40%	30.5%	49.5%	(2.46)	(0.85)
	OTHER	2%	1.5%	2.5%		
AGE	16–25	30%	31.5%	28.5%	0.191	–0.304*
	26–40	47%	53.5%	40.5%	(1.48)	(–1.98)
	41–60	20.5%	12.5%	28.5%		
	61+	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%		
EDUCATION	PRIMARY	2%	0%	4%	–0.0634	–0.589***
	SECONDARY	10.5%	9.5%	11.5%	(–0.51)	(–3.91)
	HIGH SCHOOL	32.5%	37.5%	27.5%		
	UNIVERSITY	55%	53%	57%		
MOTHER'S EDUCATION	NO ONE	5%	2.5%	8%	–0.378*	–0.146
	PRIMARY	15%	11%	19%	(–2.05)	(–1.38)
	SECONDARY	17%	20.5%	13.5%		
	HIGH SCHOOL	42%	39%	44.5%		
FATHER'S EDUCATION	UNIVERSITY	21%	27%	15%		
	NO ONE	3.5%	1.5%	6%	–0.147	–0.245*
	PRIMARY	17%	15%	19%	(–0.73)	(–2.46)
	SECONDARY	16.5%	19%	13%		
INCOME MEASURED IN NUMBER OF MINIMUM WAGES 1 MINIMI WAGE EQUALS \$85 MEXICAN PESOS	HIGH SCHOOL	30%	31.5%	28%		
	UNIVERSITY	33%	33%	34%		
	< 1 MW	4%	4%	4%	0.0184	–0.426**
	1–2 MW	18.5%	16%	21%	(0.12)	(–3.14)
UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICAL ISSUES RANDOMISATION QUESTION	2–5 MW	33%	41%	24.5%		
	> 5 MW	33.5%	31%	36.5%		
	NO RESPONSE	11%	8%	14%		
	Mean value (7-point scale):	4.7	4.867	4.533	–0.333 (–1.35)	–0.147 (1.90)
EXPOSED TO CORRUPTION LAST 12 MONTHS	NO	45.5%	52%	39.5%	0.125	–0.180
	YES	54.5%	48%	60.5%	(1.55)	(–0.76)

t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

* Shows the difference in mean values between control group and experiment group

6.1.2. The background questions' effect on the dependent variable

As discussed above, several of the background questions have an effect on the dependent variable, meaning that personal characteristics of the respondents might affect their willingness to compromise with democratic principles. It is also, as accounted for above, found in earlier studies that these background factors influence peoples' satisfaction with, or support for, democracy. Due to this, and to that in some cases there is a significant difference of the characteristics of the respondents between the control and the experiment group, all background questions are used as control variables in the following regressions analyses. This will strengthen the reliability of the results as various factors that are thought to affect the dependent variable are being controlled for.

6.2. Support for and satisfaction with democracy

To get an overview of the respondents' attitudes towards democracy two central questions in the research on support for satisfaction with democracy are included. The results are presented in table 2. It is found that as much as 79% of the respondents are 'very dissatisfied' or 'dissatisfied' with the way democracy works in Mexico, whereas only 21% say they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. As the percentage of respondents dissatisfied with democracy in this study matches the one in Latinobarómetro (2017) mentioned in the introduction, the selection group can be considered rather representative of the Mexican people on this point.

With a percentage as high as 79% of respondents being dissatisfied with the democracy, it is likely that a willingness to compromise with democratic principles exists, *if* fighting corruption is seen as a justifying reason. At the same time as 79% are dissatisfied with democracy, however, 51%⁶ of the respondents still believe democracy is the best form of government, implying that support for democracy as form of government remains.

Table 2.

DEMOCRACY SUPPORT VARIABLES		ALL RESPONDENTS	CONTROL GROUP	EXPERIMENT GROUP	DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GROUPS*
SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY	Very dissatisfied	24%	21%	26%	-0.039
	Dissatisfied	55%	59%	52%	(-0.34)
	Satisfied	19%	17%	21%	
	Very Satisfied	2%	3%	1%	
DEMOCRACY IS THE BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT	1-3	25%	24%	27.5%	-0.144
	4	24%	24%	23.5%	(-0.46)
	5-7	51%	52%	49%	

t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

* Shows the difference in mean values between control group and experiment group

6.3. Regression analysis

In this section, the treatment's effect on the dependent variable is tested in bivariate and multivariate regression analyses. First, a mean value of all indicators measuring the dependent variable is created and tested; this will constitute the main results of the study. Thereafter, bi- and multivariate regression analyses of all indicators of the dependent variable are tested

⁶ The 7-point scale is divided in to three groups, where 1-3 represents 'do not agree', 4 represents 'indifferent', and 5-7 represent 'do agree'. The statement of the question is '[...] democracy is preferable to any other form of government'.

separately to see if there are any differences in the results between different democratic principles.

6.3.1. Regression analysis: dependent variable

There are seven different indicators measuring the dependent variable. Out of these, a mean value is created to grasp a more general willingness to compromise with democratic principles. *If* the hypothesis is supported, the mean value in the experiment group should be *significantly higher* than in the control group. As mentioned earlier, all background questions are included as control variables in a multivariate regression analysis. The results are presented in table 3.

A positive significant correlation is found, indicating that the treatment (independent variable) had an effect on the dependent variable. This means that the hypothesis is supported and fighting corruption in citizens' minds legitimize restrictions of democracy. When the control variables are included both the correlation and the significance increase. This means that when controlled for personal characteristics amongst the respondents in the selection group, and thereby exclude under- or overrepresented groups amongst the respondents, the correlation is stronger. As the multivariate regression analysis control the correlation for alternative explanatory factors, these numbers are considered more reliable. The result implies that in a society where democratic government have shown unable to solve corruption, citizens are willing to sacrifice democracy to address the issue as solving the problem is seen as more important than what form of government the country has.

The adjusted R²-value, which is a statistical number of the explanation degree, is not that high, implying that there are several explanations to this correlation.

Table 3.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	ALL RESPONDENTS	CONTROL GROUP	EXPERIMENT GROUP	DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GROUPS	CONTROL VARIABLES INCLUDED
MEAN ALL DEPENDENT VARIABLES	3.037 N = 150	2.701 N = 74	3.365 N = 76	0.664** (2.87) R ² = 0.0528 Adj. R ² = 0.0464	0.808** (3.0) R ² = 0.2249 Adj. R ² = 0.1591 N = 116

t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

6.3.2. Regression analysis: indicators tested separately

When looking at all the indicators separately, it is interesting to see the high mean value in the control group for some questions, where as much as three questions have a mean value over 3 (see table 4). This indicates that even without the reason to fight corruption, there are respondents who are willing to compromise with these democratic principles.

When tested in a regression analysis, all correlations go the expected direction, in line with the hypothesis that citizens believe fighting corruption legitimize restrictions of democracy. However, only two indicators reach statistical significance when tested in a bivariate regression analysis, while three indicators reach significance when the control variables are included.

That respondents can find an authoritarian government preferable to a democratic one when it comes to corruption might be an effect of that although the country was democratized in 2000, no successful improvements in the levels of corruption has been seen. Therefore, citizens might have lost the faith in democracy as the solution to curb corruption.

As for the question regarding whether the president should have the power to control about what subjects that newspapers are allowed to public about this question shows a strong significant correlation both in the bivariate and the multivariate regression analyses. A possible explanation to why this indicator shows a stronger correlation than other questions might be the historic relationship between the ruling party and the media. Although PRI first lost the power in 2000, they ruled again until 2018 and this might have reminded citizens about the party's close connection to the media.

The third significant correlation is that the president should have the power to control what associations and organizations that can exist has the largest significant effect, both in the bivariate regression analysis and when tested with control variables. The reason for this strong correlation is however a bit harder to understand as these are fundamental pillars of democracy that has a direct effect on citizens. Probably, citizens do not perceive associations and organizations as democratic forces that help to combat corruption.

As the judicial system has received critic for being too corrupt and advantageous for those who can pay, it is surprising that this indicator does not reach statistical significance. A possible explanation might be the high mean value in the control group, which indicates that

respondents already are willing to let the president regulate the judicial systems even without fighting corruption as a given reason.

The highest mean value in the control group is achieved by the question measuring whether respondents agree on that sometimes, the president can set democratic principle aside to resolve a situation. Once again, the reason for this is hard to say. However, it can have to do with the formulation of the question (see appendix), which can be interpreted as a temporary serious situation, e.g. external threat. Although there is no strong correlation between the versions of the surveys, and therefore no statistical results, this indicator also has the highest mean value in the experiment group.

To sum up, when tested separately, all indicators show a positive correlation to the dependent variable just as expected. However, only a few of the reach statistical significance. As the statistical power has been tested and is assured, this does not have to do with the number of respondents. In some cases, it is probable that the high mean values in the control group, indicating that some respondents already are ready to compromise with these principles without the reason of fighting corruption, might explain this.

Table 4.

QUESTIONS DEPENDENT VARIABLE	ALL RESPONDENTS*	CONTROL GROUP	EXPERIMENT GROUP	DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GROUPS	CONTROL VARIABLES INCLUDED
SOMETIMES AN AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT IS PREFERIBLE TO A DEMOCRATIC	3.437 N = 151	3.12 N = 75	3.75 N = 76	0.63 (1.86) R ² = 0.0227 Adj. R ² =0.0161	1.120** (2.65) R ² = 0.1292 Adj. R ² =0.0559 N = 117
SOMETIMES THE PRESIDENT CAN SET ASIDE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES	3.993 N = 151	3.827 N = 75	4.158 N = 76	0.331 (0.98) R ² = 0.0065 Adj. R ² = -0.0002	0.524 (1.28) R ² = 0.1460 Adj. R ² = 0.0742 N = 117
PRESIDENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONTROL WHO CAN RUN FOR OFFICE	2.428 N = 152	2.213 N = 75	2.636 N = 77	0.423 (1.33) R ² = 0.0116 Adj. R ² = 0.0050	0.649 (1.70) R ² = 0.1563 Adj. R ² = 0.0853 N = 117
PRESIDENT SHOULD HAVE THE POWER TO CONTROL THE UNIONS	2.789 N = 152	2.587 N = 75	2.987 N = 77	0.400 (1.22) R ² = 0.0098 Adj. R ² = 0.0032	0.663 (1.61) R ² = 0.1218 Adj. R ² = 0.048 N = 117
PRESIDENT SHOULD HAVE THE POWER TO CONTROL NEWSPAPERS	2.184 N = 152	1.733 N = 75	2.623 N = 77	0.890** (3.11) R ² = 0.0606 Adj. R ² = 0.0543	0.764* (2.52) R ² = 0.1753 Adj. R ² = 0.1060 N = 117
PRESIDENT SHOULD HAVE THE POWER TO LIMIT FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION	2.743 N = 152	2.04 N = 75	3.429 N = 77	1.389*** (4.37) R ² = 0.1129 Adj. R ² = 0.1070	1.485*** (4.08) R ² = 0.2703 Adj. R ² = 0.2089 N = 117
PRESIDENT SHOULD HAVE THE POWER TO REGULATE THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM	3.755 N = 151	3.446 N = 74	4.052 N = 77	0.606 (1.67) R ² = 0.0184 Adj. R ² = 0.0118	0.378 (0.83) R ² = 0.1433 Adj. R ² = 0.0705 N = 116

t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

7. Conclusions

This study has examined citizens' willingness to compromise with democratic principles in order to fight corruption. The background for this is the growing number of democracies that have experienced democratic recession, i.e. democratic backsliding, the recent years.

Although there are many studies on the subject, few have examined empirical data to find out *why* these restrictions of democracy receive support. Earlier research has found that Quality of Government, where low corruption is a central part, has a statistical significance on people's satisfaction with, and support for, democracy. As the new Mexican president is promising to put an end to corruption, which is affecting both the economic and social health of the Mexican citizens, corruption was in this study tested as an explanatory variable to why citizens might support actions that restrict democracy.

Hypothesizing that when the outputs of the democratic system are long-term defected, citizens do not only feel less satisfied with the way democracy works in practice, but that they also lose faith in the democratic system as such. This might lead to that they are willing to support actions that restrict democracy, if these are seen to better address the problem.

The results of the study indicate that citizens, to some extent, are prepared to compromise with democratic principles to fight corruption. These results remain under control for various factors. This means that, corruption does not only affect citizens' satisfaction with the way democracy works in practice, but also their support for the form of government as such, making them willing to compromise with it to solve corruption. Once again referring to Kagan (2015) that stated that people do not only yearn for freedom and autonomy but also for comfort, security and order, it appears that the respondents in this study are willing to sacrifice some of their freedom and autonomy to gain some more comfort, security and order, which are all concepts affected by high levels of corruption. As an experimental method was used to test this correlation, the most probable is that it is the independent variable that has created a variation in the dependent variable between the control and experiment group. In addition to this, the correlation was tested under control for various factors and remained (it even grew stronger). Therefore, it can be argued that fighting corruption leads to a increased willingness to compromise with democratic principles.

When indicators are tested separately, the positive correlation remains; citizens' willingness to compromise with corruption increases if the reason for this is to fight corruption. However,

not all of these are indicators reach statistical significance, meaning that respondents were more willing to compromise with some democratic principles than with others. This probably depends on historic event and earlier experiences with these democratic principles (see chapter 6.3.2). Although significance is not reached in all indicators, that the correlation goes the expected direction in all indicators, even under control for various factors, is considered to show the problem that corruption affects democratic values.

Although the study shows that respondents are willing to compromise with democratic principles, it cannot predict whether they are ready to actually allow restrictions of democracy when, and if, the time comes. This opens the question if citizens are more willing to compromise with democratic principles in theory than in practice? Hopefully, Mexicans will not have to face this issue in practice as it is still unsure if the president will take undemocratic means to fulfil his promises or not. However, the study clearly shows that respondents, at least in theory, are willing to let the president restrict democracy to fight corruption.

As this study is the first to examine if fighting corruption in citizens' minds legitimize restrictions of democracy, further research examining this correlation is needed. Both further studies testing the correlation to see if it is confirmed when tested in other selection groups and countries and countries with similar conditions. Also studies examining whether there are other legitimizing factors would be of disciplinary interest. There to, to better understand *why* citizens are willing are willing to compromise with democratic principles in order to control corruption, qualitative research using both respondent and informant interviews are suggested. This can provide with a deeper understanding about how citizens reason about these issues and what the underlying factors for such support might be. This will be crucial for the possibility to take political action to solve the global trend of democratic recession.

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9. Appendix

Control Group – Spanish.



ENCUESTA PARA ESTUDIO DE TESIS

Género

Mujer	Hombre	Otro/ No quiero responder

Edad

16-25	26-40	41-60	61+

Nivel de educación

Ninguno	Primaria	Secundaria	Preparatoria/ Profesional técnico	Universitaria

Nivel de educación terminada de sus padres

	Ninguno	Primaria	Secundaria	Preparatoria/ Profesional técnico	Universitaria	No quiero responder
Madre						
Padre						

¿Cuál es su ingreso personal?

Menos de un salario mínimo	De 1 a 2 salarios mínimos	De 2 a 5 salarios mínimos	Más de 5 salarios mínimos	No quiero responder

*Un salario mínimo equivale a 100 pesos diarios

Por favor, indique hasta qué punto está usted en desacuerdo o de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones, dónde 1 significa 'muy en desacuerdo' y 7 significa 'muy de acuerdo'.

Siento que entiendo bien los asuntos políticos más importantes del país

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

En algunas circunstancias un gobierno autoritario puede ser preferible a uno democrático

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

A veces surgen situaciones especiales en las que el presidente puede dejar de lado los principios democráticos para poder resolver una situación

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

A veces, el presidente debe tener el derecho de decidir quiénes pueden postularse en las elecciones políticas del país

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

El presidente debe tener el poder de controlar los sindicatos

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

En algunas situaciones, el presidente debe tener el derecho a decidir sobre qué temas los periódicos pueden hacer publicaciones

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

El presidente debe tener el derecho a decidir qué tipo de asociaciones u organizaciones pueden existir

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

El presidente debe poder regular el sistema de justicia

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Puede ser que la democracia tenga problemas, pero es mejor que cualquier otra forma de gobierno

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

En general, ¿Usted diría que está ‘muy insatisfecho(a)’, ‘insatisfecho(a)’, ‘satisfecho(a)’ o ‘muy satisfecho(a)’ con la forma en que la democracia funciona en México?

Muy insatisfecho(a)	Insatisfecho(a)	Satisfecho(a)	Muy satisfecho(a)

Durante los últimos 12 meses, ¿Usted ha estado expuesto a alguna acción corrupta?

Si	No

¡Muchas gracias por su tiempo!

ENCUESTA PARA ESTUDIO DE TESIS



Género

Edad

Mujer	Hombre	Otro/ No quiero responder

16-25	26-40	41-60	61+

Nivel de educación

Ninguno	Primaria	Secundaria	Preparatoria/ Profesional técnico	Universitaria

Nivel de educación terminada de sus padres

	Ninguno	Primaria	Secundaria	Preparatoria/ Profesional técnico	Universitaria	No quiero responder
Madre						
Padre						

¿Cuál es su ingreso personal?

Menos de un salario mínimo	De 1 a 2 salarios mínimos	De 2 a 5 salarios mínimos	Más de 5 salarios mínimos	No quiero responder

*Un salario mínimo equivale a 100 pesos diarios

Por favor, indique hasta qué punto está usted en desacuerdo o de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones, dónde 1 significa 'muy en desacuerdo' y 7 significa 'muy de acuerdo'.

Siento que entiendo bien los asuntos políticos más importantes del país

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

En algunas circunstancias, por ejemplo para reducir la corrupción, un gobierno autoritario puede ser preferible a uno democrático

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

A veces surgen situaciones especiales en las que el presidente puede dejar de lado los principios democráticos para poder resolver una situación, por ejemplo para reducir la corrupción

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

A veces, el presidente debe tener el derecho de decidir quienes pueden postularse en las elecciones políticas del país para reducir la corrupción

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

El presidente debe tener el poder de controlar los sindicatos para reducir la corrupción

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

En algunas situaciones, el presidente debe tener el derecho a decidir sobre qué temas los periódicos pueden hacer publicaciones, por ejemplo para reducir la corrupción

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

El presidente debe tener el derecho a decidir qué tipo de asociaciones u organizaciones pueden existir, si es para reducir la corrupción

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

El presidente debe poder regular el sistema de justicia para reducir la corrupción

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Puede ser que la democracia tenga problemas, pero es mejor que cualquier otra forma de gobierno

Muy en desacuerdo

Muy de acuerdo

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

En general, ¿Usted diría que está ‘muy insatisfecho(a)’, ‘insatisfecho(a)’, ‘satisfecho(a)’ o ‘muy satisfecho(a)’ con la forma en que la democracia funciona en México?

Muy insatisfecho(a)	Insatisfecho(a)	Satisfecho(a)	Muy satisfecho(a)

Durante los últimos 12 meses, ¿Usted ha estado expuesto a alguna acción corrupta?

Si	No

¡Muchas gracias por su tiempo!



SURVEY FOR THESIS STUDY

Gender

Age

Female	Male	Other/ Prefer not to answer

16-25	26-40	41-60	61+

Level of education

None	Primary	Secondary	High School	University

Level of education completed by your parents

	None	Primary	Secondary	High School	University	Prefer not to answer
Mother						
Father						

What is your personal income?

Less than one minimum wage	1 to 2 minimum wages	2 to 5 minimum wages	More than 5 minimum wages	Prefer not to answer

* A minimum wage is equivalent to 100 pesos a day

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 means ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 means ‘strongly agree’.

I feel that I understand the most important issues in the country

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sometimes special situations arise in which the president can set aside democratic principles in order to resolve the situation

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sometimes, the president should have the power to decide who can run for office in the country's political elections

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The president should have the power to control the unions

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In some situations, the president should have the power to decide about which themes the newspapers can make publications about

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The president should have the power to decide what kinds of associations and organizations that can exist

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The president should have the power to regulate the judicial system

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

It may be that democracy has problems, but it is better than any other form of government

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In general, would you say that you are 'very dissatisfied', 'dissatisfied', 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the way democracy works in Mexico?

Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied

During the last 12 months, have you been exposed to any corrupt actions?

Yes	No

Thank you for your time!



SURVEY FOR THESIS STUDY

Gender

Age

Female	Male	Other/ Prefer not to answer

16-25	26-40	41-60	61+

Level of education

None	Primary	Secondary	High School	University

Level of education completed by your parents

	None	Primary	Secondary	High School	University	Prefer not to answer
Mother						
Father						

What is your personal income?

Less than one minimum wage	1 to 2 minimum wages	2 to 5 minimum wages	More than 5 minimum wages	Prefer not to answer

* A minimum wage is equivalent to 100 pesos a day

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 means ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 means ‘strongly agree’.

I feel that I understand the most important issues in the country

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Under some circumstances, for example to reduce corruption, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sometimes special situations arise in which the president can set aside democratic principles in order to resolve the situation, for example to reduce the corruption

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sometimes, the president should have the power to decide who can run for office in the country's political elections to reduce corruption

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

The president should have the power to control the unions to reduce corruption

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

In some situations, the president should have the power to decide about which themes the newspapers can make publications about, for example to reduce the corruption

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

The president should have the power to decide what kinds of associations and organizations that can exist, if it is to reduce the corruption

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

The president should have the power to regulate the judicial system to reduce the corruption

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

It may be that democracy has problems, but it is better than any other form of government

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

In general, would you say that you are 'very dissatisfied', 'dissatisfied', 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the way democracy works in Mexico?

Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied

During the last 12 months, have you been exposed to any corrupt actions?

Yes	No

Thank you for your time!