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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