Do voters choose the lesser evil?
How much do parties lose in highly corrupted countries?*

by

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This paper seeks to test whether corruption has an effect on voting behavior by examining the contingency of the party and leader effects on corruption. Building upon the psychological theory of trust, I argue that corruption undermines the magnitude of party effects, ideological or economic vote, but leaders who engage in a trust-repair process and look competent can offset this loss. These propositions are tested using the CSES Module 2 and 3 dataset, and the World macro indicator of corruption. My findings suggest that citizens pay attention and respond to corruption. Parties lose votes and popular support when corruption rises, either because people care less about their policies or their performance is not appreciated, or voters just look for the lesser of two evils.

Key Words: Corruption, Perceptions of Corruption, Voting Behavior, Party Effects, Leader Effects, Ideological Vote, Economic Vote

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The effects of corruption on individual behavior are by no means a new research topic. Most of the previous studies focused on its consequences on shaping political behavior, regime survival, trust and democratic values (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Bowler and Karp 2004; Canache and Allison 2005; Sandholtz and Koetzle 2000; Sandholtz and Taagepera 2005; Seligson 2002; Shabad and Slomczynski 2011; Slomczynski and Shabad 2011). A high level of corruption has been showed to undermine democratic linkages and promote a clientelistic behavior (Choi and Woo 2011, 244), but there is still a low general agreement on whether corruption and allegiances of corruption affect vote decision.

This paper seeks to test corruption's impact on voting behavior by examining whether corruption plays a role in mediating the effects of diverse vote predictors, especially party evaluations. My argument is that the level of corruption in a country may not have a direct impact on vote choice, but it undermines the magnitude of party effects, ideological or economic vote. Based on previous studies one may foresee the changes in the level of ideological and economic vote as corruption increases, but it is less obvious how party effects are adjusted to new corruption-dominating conditions. The theoretical argument builds upon the psychological theory of trust, and suggests that parties lose voters' support despite their good evaluations, because of voters' apathy towards politics. This relationship is tested at the aggregate level measuring the contingency of party effects on the country-level corruption, and at the individual level accounting for the interaction between corruption perceptions and party evaluations in the vote choice calculus. Last part of the analysis examines whether leaders can compensate for party's loss in corrupt countries by engaging in a trust-repair process. Voters are expected to choose those political actors who appear as the most credentialed and trustable among the corrupt ones when they face the situation of choosing "the lesser of two evils". Compared to the rigid and bureaucratic party organisation, leaders have an easier access to voters' hearts to build a new interpersonal trust relationship.

It is difficult to find data that include indicators for all vote predictors and corruption perceptions to test the previous hypotheses. The CSES Module 2 data

include survey questions about voters' perceptions of corruption and also party evaluations, but not party leader evaluations. Module 3 instead measures voters' evaluations of party leaders, but not their opinions about corruption. Therefore, I use CSES Module 2 to measure the mediating effect of corruption perceptions, and the CSES Module 3 dataset to test whether leaders offset parties' loss in corrupt countries. In order to increase the sample size of countries, I use both Module 2 and 3 cases to examine the contingent effect of party evaluations on corruption.

My findings suggest that the repercussion of corruption in alienating and disentangling citizens from electoral politics is indeed reflected in the decreasing intensity of party effects and ideological vote, but leaders and parties with a good image can partially offset this loss. These effects are statistically significant, but not strong enough to change the election results. The mediating role of corruption at the macro level is confirmed in the individual level analysis using the perceptions of corruption.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 presents the previous findings on the political consequences of corruption on voting behavior, and elaborates on the theoretical arguments. Section 3 outlines the research design and data, and the last section discusses the main findings.

Political Corruption

There is an extensive body of literature on corruption. Political corruption seen as "misuse of public office for private gain" (Sandholtz and Koetzle 2000, 32) undermines democratic principles as accountability, equality and fairness, reduces citizens' support for political institutions (Anderson and Tverdova 2003), political trust (Chang and Chu 2006; Morris and Klesner 2010) and regime legitimacy (Della Porta 2000; Rose-Ackerman 1999). Scholars argue that corruption leads to a smaller vote turnout, alienating and disentangling citizens from electoral politics (Davis, Camp, and Coleman 2004; Slomczynski and Shabad 2011).

Previous studies on the consequences of corruption on electoral behavior have focused especially on how it affects government approval, but without reaching an agreement on the direction and statistically significance of this effect. Fackler and Lin(1995) found a negative relationship between information about corruption and electoral support for the presidential party. They argue that information about corruption has become one of the criteria voters use to evaluate the incumbent party. Shabad and Slomczynski (2011) on contrast say that the government is punished for the rise of political corruption only when economic matters are not the main topic in the electoral campaign. Two other studies (Peters and Welch 1980; Welch and Hibbing 1997) showed that the incumbent candidates charged with corruption suffer on average a loss of six to eleven percent votes (see also Chang and Golden 2004, for the Italian case). They also acknowledged that incumbents have a high probability of being reelected despite the allegations of corruption. Scholars argue that voters' closeness to the candidates or candidates' abilities outweigh the corruption charges in the final vote decision. Manzetti and Wilson(2007) said that corrupt governments still have public support because of the strategies they use to build and satisfy clientelistic networks. Voters reelect the incumbent in spite of knowing that it is corrupt, to assure public redistribution for their personal interests.

In a nutshell, political corruption decreases institutional trust, accountability and responsiveness, and promotes a clientelistic behavior. Consequentially, low political trust leads further to a low electoral turnout and political apathy (and Citrin 1974, for an opposite perspective; Cox 2003; Grönlund and Setälä 2007; see alsoHetherington 1998). When citizens decide to vote despite the corrupted context, the reduced political accountability and responsiveness make them less inclined to vote based on government performance (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Hellwig and Samuels 2008; Hellwig 2001; Huber and Powell 1994; Powell and Whitten 1993) or policy positions (Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Heath et al. 1991, 33,44; Rusk 1987, 110; Tóka 2002; van der Brug, Franklin, and Tóka 2008; van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; van der Eijk, Franklin, and Brug 1999). The expectations are that parties lose votes because of the general apathy towards politics, and voters move towards trustworthy-politicians and party leaders who can improve

the trust repair process and build interpersonal relations with their supporters. Next section explores these processes into details using the previous psychological theories of trust.

Political Corruption – Trust – Electoral Behavior

As already mentioned, political corruption erodes voters' trust in the political system and institutions (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Chang and Chu 2006; Della Porta 2000; Seligson 2002)[1]. There are tons of pages written on the distinction between interpersonal and institutional/political trust (see Lane 1998; Warren 1999, for a detailed review). Interpersonal trust, or trust in persons (horizontal trust) is built on a one-to-one interaction, while trust in institutions (vertical trust) is a one-to-many interaction, where citizens create a hypothetical relationship with every individual within the institution.

Based on the traditional instrumental model of psychology of trustworthiness, the level of institutional trust is dictated by the degree to which public authorities serve the individuals' interests (Tyler 1998). Political trust is seen as an "encapsulated interest": A trusts B to do x (Hardin 1998); it is conditioned on A's expectations towards the legitimacy, technical competency, performance and willingness to sanction the untrustworthy behavior of B (Khodyakov 2007; Offe 1999). Thus, when corruption rises, it erodes voters' trust, expectations and confidence that institutions will fulfil their obligations. More than decreasing the level of general trust, corruption undermines voters' beliefs that political actors are trustworthy. Trust implies here "a calculation of expected return and depends on the assessed trustworthiness of others" (Wilson and Eckel 2011). It is not the general level of trust that people have in politicians, but their lower expectations in a future with these politicians, that is affected by corruption. They now expect a high level of shirking or rent seeking that cannot be prevented. Studies showed that voters with a low level of trust in political actors

[1] Despite the recursive relationship between corruption and trust there is no doubt that a high level of perceived corruption would lead to an environment dominated by institutional distrust, which could either alienate people from politics or make them vulnerable to political actors.

believe a pure sanctioning strategy does not stop the rent seeking or shirking behavior and hence do not factor past performance in their vote decision (Duch 2001, 897).

Trust is also a strategic relationship between two parts that depends also the context where the relationship forms. "Individuals do not trust in the abstract, but rather with respect to a specific target and in a particular context" (Wilson and Eckel 2011, 245). In corrupt environments, individuals might trust particular political actors in respect to certain issues, but the general apathy towards politics may erode their confidence in future political performance, mostly because the system overall is seen as corrupt. Thus, voters have fewer expectations that parties will implement/ will be able to implement the policies they advocate for during the electoral campaign, and weigh policy promises less in their vote decision.

Institutional trust may also be seen as a type of interpersonal trust, or what Harre (1999) defines a species of "person-to-person relation". The relationship one builds with an institution as political parties depends on the affective and social bonds with each of its personnel (Harre 1999, 260). This is especially possible in the new media era, where citizens have the illusion of a person-to-person relationship with members of political parties and government through their media appearances. Opposite to the instrumental model of trust, this is more a "relational psychological perspective on authority" (Hardin 1998, 281). People derive a sense of identity from their relationship with authorities and trust others like themselves. Corruption destroys this bond by making political actors look dishonest and not able to respect the ethical commitment with their voters. The generalised feeling of distrust associated with a high level of corruption makes people distant themselves from political actors and increase the general apathy towards politics. Voters are expected to become sceptical about politics and politicians, and be less supportive even when they like a party/politician.

Politicians and political parties in corrupted countries can, however, restore the previous relationship with their voters. Psychological theories of trust argue that

trustee needs to build an image of reliability in order to re-establish the previous bond. One way of doing that is by bolstering voters' beliefs about their competence (Baumeister and Jones 1978). This is similar to the model of selectioning the "good" (or less bad) representative types (Fearon 1999). Voters try to find a competent and reliable political actor among the corrupt politicians and political parties.

However, an environment dominated by corruption and low institutional trust blurs political parties' image because of the general belief that all politicians are corrupted. Voters have difficulties in identifying a party without any allegations of corruption and their evaluations are expected to count less in voters' decision because of the general apathy towards parties.

In these conditions, the political actors who connect with voters and reinforce the trust relationship gain more votes. The social trust psychological approach suggests that individual political actors, compared to institutional ones (as parties), have a better chance to connect with voters. Political leaders are expected to be more successful in attracting voters and thus compensate for the general loss in public support in corrupt countries. Individual political actors can form interpersonal relationships with their voters easier than bureaucratic, closed organisation of a party. People build indirect personal trust with politicians as seen on TV screen and form a positive opinion about the competence/image of a person faster than for an organisation with multiple actors. In contexts where the competence of politicians is questionable because of the general allegations of corruption, leaders can attract votes and support with other personal traits than competence (Bittner 2011). Thus, party leaders seem to have better chances to attract votes than the party itself.

To sum up, an increased level of corruption may send the rascals out of office, but at the same time the incumbent has the advantage of using its power to keep the support of its clientelistic networks. Thus, the contradictory effects of an increased country-level corruption may cancel each other out, and we would be unable to see a significant effect of aggregate corruption in a vote choice model.

The lack of trust generated by political corruption is expected to decrease the magnitude of economic and ideological vote. Duch (2001) shows that a low level of trust makes people less willing to apply a pure sanctioning strategy and punish the government. In this sense, economic voting is expected to be weaker in corrupted countries characterised by a high level of distrust. Ideological vote is also smaller in corrupted countries since people would not believe in the electoral promises politicians make and their ideological orientations would not be relevant in unpredictable futures, characterised by self-interested politicians.

The high apathy towards politics is expected to make voters factor party sympathies less in corrupt countries. In these conditions, if they do not abstain to vote voters may use other cues to choose their representatives. Because of the high distrust and apathy in the country, voters face a "choosing the lesser of two evils" dilemma. I argue that feelings towards party leaders have a strong influence in this voting strategy, because a person-to-person trust relationship is easier to be rebuilt than one with an abstract identity as a party organisation.

Next section examines these hypothetical expectations empirically by observing the consequences of aggregate corruption on vote predictors. I also test if corruption has contextual effects on voting behavior at the individual level, by using voters' perceptions of corruption. This approach will show whether the environmental conditions amply or are reflected in individual perceptions and actions.

Research design and Analysis

The previous section underlines the main theoretical expectations about the influence of corruption on voting behavior. Figure 1 illustrates the possible links between corruption, vote predictors and the final vote decision. I argue and test with different multilevel models that aggregate level of political corruption, and also as individuals perceive it, affects the magnitude of the causal effects of voting predictors on vote decision (red line in Figure1). In this case, corruption would be a moderator of voting predictors. One may argue that voting predictors are instead mediators of the link between corruption and vote: corruption affects voters' evaluations of party, leaders or past performance before, which are included afterwards in voters' decisions. This analysis tests only the first prepositions, looking at the conditional effect of corruption on the magnitude of voting predictors (red lines in Figure 1). Past research showed that voters react differently to corruption, if one considers their direct experience in bribing a public service officer or their perceptions about the level of corruption in the country (Klašnja, Tucker, and Deegan-Krause 2012). The data available allow us to test only for the impact of the corruption perception on vote choice.

[Figure 1 – about here]

In terms of research design, modelling party choice would be the ideal approach. The problem is that parties and their number vary by country, and comparative results are difficult to obtain. A solution is using a multilevel model with the same dependent variable for all countries. In this paper, the dependent variable is the vote for the incumbent, coded 1 if the respondent voted for the party of the president (in presidential regimes) or prime minister (in parliamentary or semi presidential regimes), and 0 otherwise. Hence, the estimated models are multilevel logit models with random intercept and/or slopes. One of the advantages of using this dependent variable is that the party and its leader are well known, and even if the prime minister is not the leader of the party, people are familiar with them.

Data used come from the CSES Module 2(2002-2006) and Module 3(2007-2011) datasets[2] and the macro indicator of corruption is measured by the World Bank control of corruption index. Because the survey items for perceptions of corruption are available only in the second CSES module, while evaluations of the party leader are in the third module, the analysis section is divided in three parts. First part focuses on the conditional effect of corruption on party effects (and ideological and economic vote) using 58 election studies for parliamentary elections in 35 countries from Module 2 and 3 data. The second part examines whether individual perceptions of corruption have the same moderating effect on party evaluations using 29 election studies from Module 2 dataset. The third part of the analysis includes 30 country-years from Module 3, and test for the contingency of leader effects on corruption, evaluating also whether the difference between party and leader evaluations is a stronger predictor of vote choice for the incumbent in high-corrupted environments.

The analyses include all the main predictors of vote choice (economic evaluations, ideological distance from PM party, party and leader evaluations) and control variables (age, education, gender, urban status and income at the individual level. At the macro level, the variables considered are the key macro indicator of corruption, country's democratic experience measured by polity IV indicator, and institutional characteristics that promote a personal vote: whether the country is a presidential system, with a majoritarian electoral law and voting for single candidates procedures (check Appendix 1 for the description of the variables included). The control variables for country level are used to control for the strong correlation between different aspects of a personalizing political system, new democratic regimes and corruption. The individual level variables are centred at the their country mean, while the macro level predictors at the grand mean to facilitate the interpretation of the intercept and the slope

[2] Countries included in the CSES Module 2 and 3 dataset: Australia(2004, 2007), Albania(2005), Brazil(2002, 2010), Bulgaria (2001), Canada(2004), Croatia(2007), Czech Republic(2002, 2006), Denmark(2001, 2007), Estonia(2011), Finland(2003, 2007), France(2007), Greece(2009), Germany(2002, 2005, 2009), Hungary(2002), Iceland(2002, 2007, 2009), Ireland(2002, 2007), Israel(2003, 2006), Japan(2004, 2007), Mexico(2003, 2006, 2009), Netherlands(2002, 2006), New Zealand(2002, 2008), Norway(2001, 2005), Philippines(2004), Poland(2001, 2005, 2007, Portugal(2002, 2005, 2009), Sweden(2006), Slovakia(2010), Slovenia(2004, 2008), Spain(2004, 2008), Sweden(2002, 2006), Uruguay(2009), USA(2004)

parameters in multilevel models and be more conservative in the significance testing of the interaction effects (Enders and Tofighi 2007). The tables with the analysis will not include the coefficients of the control variables, but they are available under request.

As a starting point for a hierarchical model, I run random effects ANOVA and look at the cross-country variation of the outcome in the baseline model (a model including only a random intercept). If it is different from the chance level, a multilevel approach is appropriate[3]. In the analysis, tests showed that there is residual heterogeneity in the vote choice model, thus vote for the incumbent varies across countries: the incumbent has more chances to be reelected in some countries more than in others. The next question is whether vote predictors have statistically significant random effects, so we can measure and compare the magnitude of their effects across different levels of corruption[4]. These results echo findings from previous studies that strength of individual predictors' contribution on vote decision varies across countries (e.g. party and leader evaluations, ideological distance, government performance).

Aggregate Corruption and the Party Effects

The first theoretical expectation was that country-level corruption has contradictory effects on vote decision that may wash out the net overall direct impact of corruption in the decision making process. However, a context dominated by corruption is expected to make voters less willing to apply an economic or ideological vote, while the general apathy towards politics

[3] To test whether the variation is significantly different than 0, scholars use likelihood ratio test between the multilevel baseline model and a model that allows only for individual variation. Because I am using the lm4 package in R to run the models, the multilevel (glmer) models cannot be compared with the corresponding cross-sectional polled model (glm) fits (the log-likelihoods are not commensurate (i.e., they include different additive terms)). In this case, I apply a Bayesian multilevel approach (MCMC) to estimate the credible intervals and see whether it includes 0 and run a likelihood ratio test in Stata between a random effects baseline model (using the gllamm command) and a logit simple model.

4 In order to see whether the random effects are statistically significant, we run likelihood ratio tests between a model with and without random effects of the predictor of interest. These tests can be provided under request.

decreases the popular support even for well-seen parties. Model 1 and 2 in Table 1 confirm these expectations partially.

[Table 1 – about here][5]

Corruption does not have a statistically significant direct effect on individual vote decision (its coefficient is negative, which means that as corruption increases, the probability of voting for the incumbent decreases, but this effect is not statistically significant). Thus, the link A in Figure 1 is not confirmed by the analysis in Table 1. The incumbent may remain in power even in highly corrupt environment. There are no strong theoretical reasons to expect the government replaced when the whole political system is seen as corrupt. Allegations of corruption for members of the cabinet may determine people to throw the rascals out, but the incumbent may still remain in power by using the national resources to guarantee support from its clientelistic networks. However, Model 2 shows that corruption affects voting decision indirectly by moderating the strength of ideological vote and party effects[6].

All individual level vote predictors used in Model 1 and 2 have a positive impact on the voter's decision to support the incumbent (they have strong, positive fixed effects effects in Model 1). As voters' evaluations of the incumbent party or its past performance increase, they are more inclined to keep the incumbent in office. A smaller distance between voters' and the party ideological positions makes voters more inclined to support the incumbent. In corrupt countries, the positive impact of party evaluations and ideological distance are reduced (negative statistically significant cross level coefficients). This confirms the link B in Figure 1 for party effects and ideological vote. Voters are skeptical about the future and policy promises, and parties they like have a smaller influence in their decision when corruption increases. Evaluations of government performance have the same role in vote decision in corrupt or less corrupt countries (their

5 The analysis in Model 1 and 2 in Table 1 includes data from 29 country-years from the CSES Module 2 and other 29 country-years from the CSES Module 3. Control variables included in the models, but not presented in the table: age, education, income, urban status (individual level), majoritarian electoral system, single candidate vote, presidential systems and polity IV (aggregate level).

6 A short description of cross-level interactions is included in the Appendix 2

coefficient is positive, but not statistically significant) [7]. If significant, the positive coefficient of their interaction with corruption would mean that voters value more a good performance when the political environment is hostile than in good governance contexts.

[Figure 2 – about here][8]

Figure 2 offers a more detailed picture of how corruption moderates the role of party evaluations by displaying the marginal effect of party assessments and its 95% confidence interval across the observed range of corruption. The diminishing impact of an increasing level of corruption on party effects is observed only for voters who have moderate/average feeling towards the incumbent party (Fig. 2.2.). One unit increase from the country mean in party evaluations on the 10 point like-dislike scale increases the probability of supporting the incumbent by 11% in non-corrupt countries (e.g. Denmark 2001 or Finland in 2003) and only by 4% in highly corrupt countries (Albania 2005 or Philippines 2004).

For voters who appreciate the incumbent (most probably they are strong partisans of the incumbent) the marginal effect of party evaluations is stronger in countries with higher level of corruption (Fig. 2.3.) This initially seems to contradict the theoretical expectations; but it can also be a sign that voters look for the lesser of two evils in corrupted countries; they punish the mediocre parties and reward the ones with a good image (that most of the times are the parties they also feel closer to). A well-seen incumbent has a 10 percent higher probability to be re-elected in corrupt countries, while, in non-corrupt countries, the marginal effect of liking a party is not higher than 3 percent. These results confirm the previous findings that the government's partisans support the incumbent despite the allegations of corruption (Andersen and Tverdova 2003).

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[7] The cross-level interaction between ideological distance and level of corruption remains statistically significant and at almost the same magnitude in all the models included, the same way as economic voting is statistically insignificant no matter what models it is included in.

[8] All other variables are held at their country or grand mean. Marginal effects = the change in predicted probabilities for one unit increase in evaluations. The measures are calculated only with fixed effects coefficients (it assumes 0 variance of random effects) adapting Brambor(2006)'s code for simple categorical models.

[Figure 3 – about here][9]

The eroding effect of corruption on ideological vote is more straightforward and is statistical significant mostly for high ideological congruence between voters and the incumbent (Figure 3). The probability of supporting the incumbent on policy issues is almost 10 percent higher in countries with low level of corruption (the 95% confidence interval is in fact 5-15%), and no more than 4 percent in highly corrupt contexts (Figure 3.3).

Perceptions of corruption and Party Effects

In Model 1 and 2 (Table 1), we saw that aggregate corruption has an indirect effect on vote decision and moderates the role of ideology and party preferences, but not the impact of government performance evaluations. This section tests whether these relationships are confirmed at the individual level by evaluating the interaction between vote predictors and perceptions of corruption, and thus estimate the links C and D in Figure 1.

[Table 2 – about here][10]

The perceptions that corruption is widespread amongst politicians have a negative (statistically significant) effect on support for the incumbent (Model 3, Table 2). People punish the incumbent (the party who has the prime minister or the president) when they think corruption is present in the country. This effect is still negative and significant after including government performance evaluations in the model, but disappears when we control for the party evaluations (Model 4, Table 2). Corruption perception may influence voters' feelings towards the incumbent party, and this is reflected afterwards in the vote

[9] All other variables are held at their country or grand mean. Marginal effects = the change in predicted probabilities for one unit increase in evaluations. The measures are calculated only with fixed effects coefficients (it assumes 0 variance of random effects) adapting Brambor(2006)'s code for simple categorical models.

[10] The analysis in Model 3-5 in Table 2 includes data from 29 country-years from the CSES Module 2. I use the same control variables as in the previous models, but not presented in the table: age, education, income, urban status (individual level), majoritarian electoral system, single candidate vote, presidential systems and polity IV (aggregate level).

choice. Party effects thus play a mediator role for the effect of perceptions of corruption on vote decision[11]. This means that there is no link C in Figure 1, but there might be a link E from perceptions to party evaluations, reflected after in vote decision.

[Figure 4 – about here][12]

The moderating effect of aggregate corruption on party effects found in Model 2 is confirmed at the individual level. Perceptions of corruption also decrease the magnitude of ideological and economic vote (the interaction effects is no more statistically significant when one includes party evaluations in the model). Despite the negative, statistically significant interaction coefficient of party evaluations and corruption perceptions, its magnitude is too small to make a difference in the marginal effect of party preferences (Figure 4)[13]. We additionally control for the level of aggregate corruption in the country and use three-way interaction effects between aggregate level of corruption, perceptions of corruption and party evaluations, but there are no statistically significant differences between the conditional impact of perceptions of corruption on party effects in corrupt or less corrupt environments.

Party vs. Leader Effects in Corrupt Contexts

In the first two parts of this section, we saw that corruption does not have a direct contextual effect on vote choice, but it affects the mechanisms people use in making a choice. Perceptions of corruption affect support for the incumbent, but only by changing people's evaluations of the party of the prime minister or president. Additionally, Model 2 showed that people value good parties more in

11 In Figure 1 these presuppositions would validate the links between corruption perception – party evaluations and vote decision. Future analysis using simultaneous equations model can validate the above propositions.

12 All other variables are held at their country or grand mean. Marginal effects = the change in predicted probabilities for one unit increase in evaluations. The measures are calculated only with fixed effects coefficients (it assumes 0 variance of random effects) adapting Brambor(2006)'s code for simple categorical models.

13 We use the results from a random slopes model to predict the marginal effects in Figure 4. The same results are obtained using the same model but without random slopes.

distrustful politics, but punish the mediocre parties, trying to choose the lesser of two evils. Our theoretical expectations were that leaders create faster a good impression than parties by building an interpersonal trust relationship with their voters. Studies showed that parties' evaluations are influenced by their leader's evaluations (Crewe and King 1994; Wagner and Weßels 2012). Therefore, it is thus important to disentangle the leader evaluations from the party evaluations and see which one is moderated by corruption in a vote choice function. Moreover, if ideology weighs less in vote decision, other elements (e.g. leader charisma) may attract their votes and increase their electoral support.

[Table 3 – about here][14]

After controlling for leader evaluations in Model 6, the fixed effect of party evaluations decreases slightly compared to previous models. Strong, positive feelings towards the party leader increase voters' support, while their cross-level interaction with corruption is positive, but not statistically significant[15]. Plotting the marginal effect of leader evaluations over the observed range of corruption in Figure 5 indicates that leaders play an independent role from their parties in influencing vote decision only for high levels of corruption[16]. However, the marginal effect is quite small, no more than 4 percent, to make a difference in vote decision.

[Figure 5 – about here][17]

It is difficult to disentangle how much of leader influence is counted for by party effects considering the endogeneity of party evaluations on leader evaluations. Therefore, in the last part of this section uses an indicator for the difference in evaluations of the leader and its party. This new variable captures the advantage

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[14] The analysis in Model 6-7 in Table 3 includes data from 29 country-years from the CSES Module 3. I use the same control variables as in the previous models, but not presented in the table: age, education, income, urban status (individual level), majoritarian electoral system, single candidate vote, presidential systems and polity IV (aggregate level).

[15] When party evaluations are excluded, the

[16] The 95% confidence interval of their marginal effects in non-corrupt countries includes 0.

[17] All other variables are held at their country or grand mean. Marginal effects = the change in predicted probabilities for one unit increase in evaluations. The measures are calculated only with fixed effects coefficients (it assumes 0 variance of random effects) adapting Brambor(2006)'s code for simple categorical models.

of the party leader vs. party assessments avoiding at the same time the endogeneity and multicolinearity issues from Model 6. Including the difference as a covariate of vote choice also helps testing whether leader or party's role is conditioned by voters' evaluations of the other one

$$DIF_i = Leader\ Evaluation_i\ -\ Party\ Evaluation_i$$ [18]

The expectations are that the probability of voting for the incumbent increases when voters' opinions are consistent. Voters are less inclined to vote the party when one of its icons, either leader or the party as a whole, is less appreciated. In order to test empirically these relationships, we replace the leader and party evaluations in Model6 with their difference. A squared term of the difference is also included to account for the concave-shaped relation between the difference and the dependent variable. To test for the contingency of leader advantage upon corruption, we use the cross-level interaction between corruption and random effects of the difference, whose coefficient should be positive to confirm our expectations.

Model 7 in Table 3 shows that indeed the probability of voting for the incumbent increases as the difference between leader and party decreases. The cross-level interaction is also positive, which means that a higher level of corruption reduces the decreasing effect of a higher difference between the leader and its party. This confirms the initial expectations that the congruence between party and its leader is desirable, and the difference between the two decreases the electoral support for the party. However, in corrupt contexts a better image of at least one of them compensates partially for this loss. Voters choose the lesser of two evils, and at least one of them: party or leader, if not both, should improve their performance/image to attract more votes. Based on our theoretical arguments, leaders have more chances to do that.

[Figure 6 – about here][19]

[18] Higher values of the difference indicate a leader advantage.

[19] All other variables are held at their country or grand mean. Marginal effects = the change in predicted probabilities for one unit increase in evaluations. The measures are calculated only with fixed effects coefficients (it assumes 0 variance of random effects) adapting Brambor(2006)'s code for simple categorical models.

Plotting the marginal effects for one unit increase in the leader or party advantage does not help us examine whether the leader or its party have a higher role in attracting votes (Figure 6). The high standard errors, which are partially explained by the small 29 country-years sample, create broad confidence intervals (same problem in Figure 5); thus we cannot conclude that the impact of incongruence between leader and party vary across the observed range of corruption.

Discussion and conclusions

There is no doubt that political corruption affects individual behavior and how people position themselves towards politics, whether we refer to their support for political institutions (Anderson and Tverdova 2003) or trust in politicians and the general system (Chang and Chu 2006; Morris and Klesner 2010). When it comes to electoral behavior, the previous studies have shown that corruption leads to a smaller vote turnout, alienating and disentangling citizens from electoral politics (Davis, Camp, and Coleman 2004; Slomczynski and Shabad 2011), but there are contradictory findings on how it affects the electoral support. This paper examines the impact of corruption on voting behavior focusing on its moderating effect on the magnitude of voting predictors, especially party effects.

The previous contradictory findings that voters may punish the incumbent if accused of corruption, but also support it despite the allegations of corruption when they are partisans of that party cancel each other out in my initial model – and the direct effect of aggregate corruption is not statistically significant in predicting the vote for the PM party. As Dutch(2001) argued, when individuals do not trust politicians, they are more reluctant to change the incumbent with new self-seeking politicians, who would change the status-quo only for their interest. The contextual corruption does not have a direct impact on support for the incumbent, but the individual perceptions of corruptions do, mediated by voters' evaluations of the incumbent party (here prime minister or presidential party)

Controlling for how frequent the clientelistic practices are in the country and whether voters receive any benefits from corrupt incumbents, would give us a better picture of the direct effect of corruption. In addition, the political culture in the country may be an important contextual aspect that alters individual response to corruption. The way people perceive corruption – whether it is illegal or not, or they see it as a immoral practice, changes their attitudes

towards allegations of political corruptions (Canache and Allison 2005), and consequentially their decisions on whether to punish the government for it.

The analysis indicates that aggregate corruption does have an impact on vote decision, but this is indirect through the impact on the magnitude of voting behavior's predictors. Aggregate corruption shapes the impact of the ideological distance from the incumbent and policy-positions weigh less in voting decision. When future seems unpredictable and self-oriented politicians are in power, voters believe less in policy programs and the Dowsian distance is less important in vote strategy. Contrary to the expectations, economic vote is not affected by the level of corruption in the country. People might not apply a sanction economic model as Duch(2001) argued, but the analysis showed that they use the selection model, trying to find the least worse political actor within the bad corrupted ones.

The repercussion of corruption in alienating and disentangling citizens from electoral politics is reflected in the loss in intensity of party effects in contexts with a high level of corruption. This diminishing effect affects especially incumbents with an average preference within voters. Those presidential or prime minister parties which voters highly appreciate (or are partisans of) have even a higher chance to be re-elected in corrupt contexts than in non-corrupt countries. Contrary to previous perceptions that ordinary citizens are ignorant and they do not respond to politics adequately, we find that voters try to find the lesser of two evils in poor governance and reward the parties that they prefer better (even when this is just because they are partisans of that party).

When individuals evaluate the government as being corrupt, they adjust the evaluations of the incumbent party and also factor them less in their vote decision. The difference perceptions of corruptions make in the magnitude of party effects is small to change the predicted probabilities. The perceptions of corruption are also reflected in a lower ideological and economic vote (these relationship are statistically significant when one does not account for party evaluations in voters' decision). Once again, voters respond to the political context around them. They pay less attention to what parties advocate for when

the context is distrustful or they believe politicians are corrupt. Government evaluations matter less when individuals consider the government corrupt, but just a high level of aggregate corruption does not affect the economic vote. The next step in analysing this topic is to see whether voters actually perceive the real level of corruption in the country, which is then reflected in their vote decision, and whether aggregate corruption or perceptions of corruption are included in voters' evaluations of the government or the incumbent party.

Political leaders seem to have a stronger contribution on their party's vote share in corrupted countries. Despite the insignificant cross-level interaction coefficient, the marginal effect across the observed range of aggregate corruption is statistically significant only for high values of the indicator of corruption. However, one must be reserved about these results, since the wide 95% confidence interval of the marginal effect may be a consequence of small level two cases (only 29 countries – from the third advanced release of the CSES Module 3 dataset). Future analysis after the final release will indicate whether these results hold for a higher number of countries in the model.

The congruence between parties and their leaders brings more votes. In corrupt environments parties have more incentives to invest in improving the relationship with their voters even if this leads to incongruence between them and their leader, since this incongruence does not weigh down their popular support as much as in non-corrupt environments. These results reinforce the previous findings that voters appreciate and reward those parties and leaders that attract their sympathy. Our theoretical reasoning indicates that leaders have higher chances to regain voters' trust and votes.

Citizens pay attention and respond to corruption. Parties lose votes and support when corruption rises, either because people care less about their policies or their performance is not appreciated as much as before, or voters just look for the lesser of two evils. Good politicians have high chances to attract votes despite the increase apathy and distrust among voters. Future research will indicate though what exactly voters believe are good politicians in corrupted countries. It could be that politicians with an anti-corruption populist discourse may attract

more attention, or voters may like more an incumbent party just because they receive direct clientelistic benefits from it.

This paper investigated only some of the possible links between corruption and vote decision (Figure 1). Next step is to examine the other indirect links between aggregate corruption and perceptions of corruption, and voting behavior using simultaneous equation models. These may indicate whether the aggregate level of corruption is reflected in voters' evaluations of how corrupt the government is and whether these have a different impact on vote decision in different contexts. Based on the results of this paper, we would expect context to have a conditional impact independent of voters' perceptions. In addition, a simultaneous equation model will indicate if party and government evaluations are adjusted according to the level of corruption, or as presented in this paper, corruption only moderates the impact of these evaluations on vote choice.

Appendix 1

Variables in the Analysis

VOTE CHOICE: - (vote for prime minister or president's party in parliamentary elections) - only coded for respondents who gave a valid answer regarding their vote in the last national election in the lower or upper house. It is coded 1 when their vote choice is the prime minister (for presidential systems) party, and 0 otherwise.

PARTY EVALUATION: measured on a 0-10 scale where 0 = strongly dislike and 10 = strongly like as a response to Q9[a:i] in the CSES survey (*I'd like to know what you think about each of our political parties. After I read the name of a political party, please rate it on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that party and 10 means that you strongly like that party. If I come to a party you haven't heard of or you feel you do not know enough about, just say so. The first party is [PARTY A].)* Responses are selected according to the party that has the Prime Minister in power.

LEADER EVALUATION: - measured on a 0-10 scale where 0 = strongly dislike and 10 = strongly like as a response to Q10[a:i] in the CSES survey (*And what do you think of the presidential candidates/party leaders? After I read the name of a presidential candidate/party leader, please rate them on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that candidate and 10 means that you strongly like that candidate. If I come to a presidential candidate/party leader you haven't heard of or you feel you do not know enough about, just say so. The first is [LEADER A]).* Responses are selected according the party that has the Prime Minister in power.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION: measures the response regarding respondent's evaluations of government performance in general *(Q6. Now thinking about the performance of the [government in [CAPITAL]/president] in general, how good or bad a job do you think the [government/president in [CAPITAL]] has done over the past [NUMBER OF YEARS SINCE LAST GOVERNMENT TOOK OFFICE, BEFORE THE CURRENT ELECTION] years? Has*

[it/he/she] done a very good job? A good job? A bad job? A very bad job?) The initial 4-point scales (from 4=very bad to 1=very good) was reverted so the high values would measure positive evaluations.

IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE: measures the distance between the prime minister/president party and the respondent based on the formula: ideological distance = | respondent left-right self-placement – party left-right position|. Respondent's left-right self-placement is measured on a 0-10 scale where 0 = left and 10 = right as a response to Q24 in the CSES survey (*"In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?"*). Left-right self-placement was substituted with a Progressive-Conservative self-placement in the Japanese survey ("*Regarding the government, sometimes the terms Progressive and Conservative are used. Please rank yourself on a 0-10 scale with 0 being most progressive and 10 being most conservative.* "). Party left-right position is also measured on the same type of scale as a response to Q11a-I in the CSES survey (*In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place [PARTY A] on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?)*. Progressive-Conservative scale used in the Japanese survey.

DIFFERENCE = calculated as the difference between LEADER EVALUATIONS and PARTY EVALUATIONS. It is rescaled to a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 for high party preferences and low leader preferences, and 10 for high leader preferences and low party preferences.

PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION – measures the the response regarding respondent's evaluations of corruption amongst politicians: *"How widespread do you think corruption such as bribe taking is amongst politicians in [country]: very widespread, quite widespread, not very widespread, it hardly happens at all?".* The initial 4-point scales (from 4=it hardly happens at all to 1=very widespread) was reverted so the high values would measure perceptions of high corruption.

AGE: - the age of the respondent in years;

EDUCATION LOW: coded 1 for primary education or less and 0 otherwise;

EDUCATION HIGH: coded 1 for university education or more and 0 otherwise;

INCOME: personal income, divided into quintiles (from 0=lowest to 4=highest) by election;

MALE: coded 1 for men and 0 for women;

URBAN: coded 1 for suburbs of large town or cities and lage towns or city and 0 for rural area or village and small or middle-sized town.

CORRUPTION – index developed by the World Bank to "capture perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests" (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2010, see http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf/cc.pdf for the sources used to create the index). It includes responses from expert and public surveys. The initial index was rescaled to a 1 to 10 scale, where 1 for the least corrupted countries in the sample, and 10 for the most corrupted ones.

PRESIDENTIAL – coded 1 for presidential regime, 0 otherwise (CSES Macro-dataset);

MAJORITARIAN – coded 1 if the country uses a majoritarian formula in all of its electoral segments, 0 otherwise (CSES Macro-dataset);

CANDIDATE – coded 1 if voters vote for single candidates and 0 if voters choose party lists (CSES Macro-dataset)

POLITY IV – polity score developed by Polity IV Project. The score varies from -10(strongly autocratic) to +10(strongly democratic). In this analysis the polity variable varies from 8 to 10. Dataset downloaded from http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm (June 5, 2012).

Appendix 2

Cross-level interactions

At the beginning of this section we said that measuring and comparing the strength of leader effects across levels of corruption is a difficult process because the quantity of interest is a causal effect on vote for the incumbent, which cannot be observed directly, but multilevel modelling is a good tool in this process. The next paragraph explains how it works.

Multilevel model:

$$Vote\_Choice = \beta_{0i} + \beta_{1i}*Party\_Ev + \beta_{2i}*Leader\_Ev + \beta_{3i}*Ideol\_Dis + \beta_{4i}*Ideol\_Dis + \beta_j*Indiv\_Control\_Var_j+\varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Where: $\beta_{0i} = \beta_0 + \gamma_1*Corruption + \gamma_k*Macro\_Control\_Var_k$

$$\beta_{1i} = \beta_1 + \theta_1*Corruption + \zeta_1 \text{ (Party Evaluation coefficient)}$$

$$\beta_{2i} = \beta_2 + \theta_2*Corruption + \zeta_2 \text{ (Leader Evaluation coefficient)} \quad (2)$$

$$\beta_{3i} = \beta_3 + \theta_3*Corruption + \zeta_3 \text{ (Government Performance coefficient)}$$

$$\beta_{4i} = \beta_4 + \theta_4*Corruption + \zeta_4 \text{ (Ideological Distance coefficient)}$$

Thus, the combined multilevel model and the one presented in Table 4 is:

$$Vote\_Choice = \beta_0 + \gamma_1*Corruption + \gamma_k*Macro\_Control\_Var_k + (\beta_1 + \theta_1*Corruption + \zeta_1)*Party\_Ev + (\beta_2 + \theta_2*Corruption + \zeta_2)_i*Leader\_Ev + (\beta_3 + \theta_3*Corruption + \zeta_3)*Ideol\_Dis + (\beta_4 + \theta_4*Corruption + \zeta_4)*Ideol\_Dis + \beta_j*Indiv\_Control\_Var_j+\varepsilon \quad (3)$$

θ_2 captures the conditional effect of corruption on the causal impact of leader evaluations $_2$ (eq. 2). If θ_2 is statistically significant, leader effects are contingent on corruption; if θ_2 is negative corruption decreases their magnitude, while when

θ_2 is positive corruption magnifies the impact of leaders on vote choice. The idea behind the cross-level interaction in a multilevel model is that corruption (the macro level variable) is a covariate of the cross-country variation of the individual level coefficient β_{2i}. Thus, θ_2 (saved as cross-level interaction coefficient in Table2) represents the partial indirect effect of corruption, while the direct effect of corruption on the variation of vote choice across countries is γ_1 (under fixed effects of corruption in Table2). To analyse whether leader assessments are contingent on level of corruption we look at the cross-level interaction. To explain the total impact of corruption and party leader on vote choice we need to consider both their direct and indirect effects in predicting the probabilities of an incumbent to be reelected.

Table 1. The Indirect Impact of Aggregate Corruption on Vote for the Incumbent via Party Evaluations

	Model 1	Model 2
Fixed Effects		
Intercept	-2.559^{***}	-2.668^{***}
	(0.305)	(0.270)
Government evaluations	0.358^{***}	0.378^{***}
	(0.024)	(0.071)
Ideological distance	0.240^{***}	0.263^{***}
	(0.008)	(0.021)
Party Evaluations	0.583^{***}	0.617^{***}
	(0.008)	(0.027)
Corruption	-0.300	0.056
	(0.247)	(0.220)
Cross-level Interactions		
Government Evaluations * Corruption		0.025
		(0.075)
Ideologic Distance * Corruption		-0.090^{***}
		(0.022)
Party Evaluations * Corruption		-0.175^{***}
		(0.029)
Random Effects (Variance)		
Intercept	1.653	1.297
Government Evaluations		0.229
Ideological Distance		0.019
Party Evaluations		0.037
Log-likelihood	-16775.545	-15898.770
Deviance	33551.090	31797.540
AIC	33583.090	31853.540
N	46390	46390
Groups	58	58

****: $p \leq .01$; **: $p \leq .05$; *: $p \leq .10$*

Table 2. The Impact of Corruption Perceptions on Vote for the Incumbent

	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Fixed Effects			
Intercept	-1.759^{***}	-2.573^{***}	-2.563^{***}
	(0.263)	(0.272)	(0.272)
Ideological distance	0.439^{***}	0.275^{***}	0.275^{***}
	(0.046)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Government evaluations	1.044^{***}	0.394^{***}	0.391^{***}
	(0.155)	(0.099)	(0.098)
Corruption Perceptions	-0.076^{**}	0.042	0.129^{***}
	(0.038)	(0.035)	(0.041)
Party Evaluations		0.594^{***}	0.593^{***}
		(0.054)	(0.054)
Corruption	-0.775^{***}	-0.735^{***}	-0.743^{***}
	(0.236)	(0.261)	(0.259)
Interaction effects			
C Perceptions * Party Evaluations			-0.039^{***}
			(0.014)
C Perceptions * Ideological Distance			-0.018
			(0.015)
C Perceptions * Government Evaluations			-0.064
			(0.049)
Random Effects (Variance)			
Intercept	1.223	1.192	1.202
Ideological Distance	0.056	0.032	0.032
Government Evaluations	0.642	0.219	0.216
Corruption Perceptions	0.019	0.010	0.011
Party Evaluations		0.078	0.078
Log-likelihood	-9493.651	-7643.004	-7635.005
Deviance	18987.302	15286.008	15270.009
AIC	19037.302	15348.008	15338.009
N	21945	21945	21945
Groups	29	29	29

****: $p \leq .01$; **: $p \leq .05$; *: $p \leq .10$*

Table 3. The Indirect Impact of Aggregate Corruption on Vote for the Incumbent via Party vs. Leader Evaluations

	Model 6	Model 7
Fixed Effects		
Intercept	-2.225^{***}	-1.814^{***}
	(0.714)	(0.610)
Government Evaluations	0.283^{***}	1.066^{***}
	(0.095)	(0.156)
Ideological distance	0.259^{***}	0.419^{***}
	(0.028)	(0.031)
Party Evaluations	0.571^{***}	
	(0.039)	
Leader Evaluations	0.119^{***}	
	(0.025)	
Leader-Party Evaluations		0.310^{***}
		(0.111)
(Leader - Party Evaluations)^2		-0.064^{***}
		(0.010)
Corruption	0.474	0.228
	(0.330)	(0.279)
Cross-level Interactions		
Government Evaluations * Corruption	0.055	-0.145
	(0.105)	(0.175)
Ideological Distance * Corruption	-0.048	-0.078^{**}
	(0.031)	(0.034)
Party Evaluations * Corruption	-0.170^{***}	
	(0.044)	
Leader Evaluations * Corruption	0.022	
	(0.027)	
(Leader - Party Evaluations) * Corruption		0.123^{**}
		(0.058)
Random Effects (Variance)		
Intercept	1.346	0.945
Government Evaluations	0.199	0.648
Ideological Distance	0.017	0.022
Party Evaluations	0.036	
Leader Evaluations	0.011	
Leader - Party Evaluations		0.058
Log-likelihood	-7830.548	-9779.238
Deviance	15661.096	19558.476
AIC	15731.096	19616.476
N	23374	23374
Groups	29	29

****: $p \leq .01$; **: $p \leq .05$; *: $p \leq .10$*

Figure 1. The links between corruption and vote decision

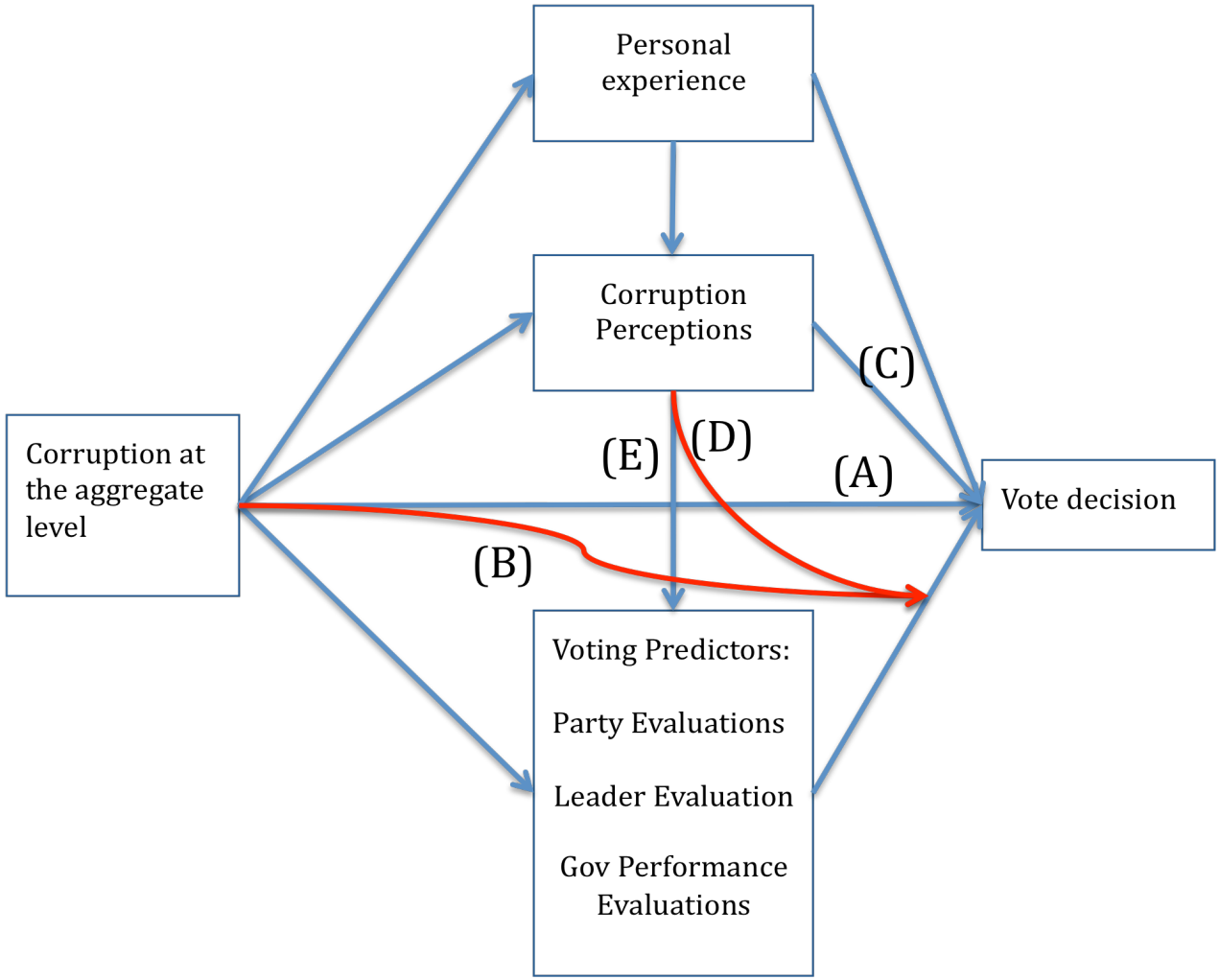


Figure 2. Party effects across the observed range of corruption

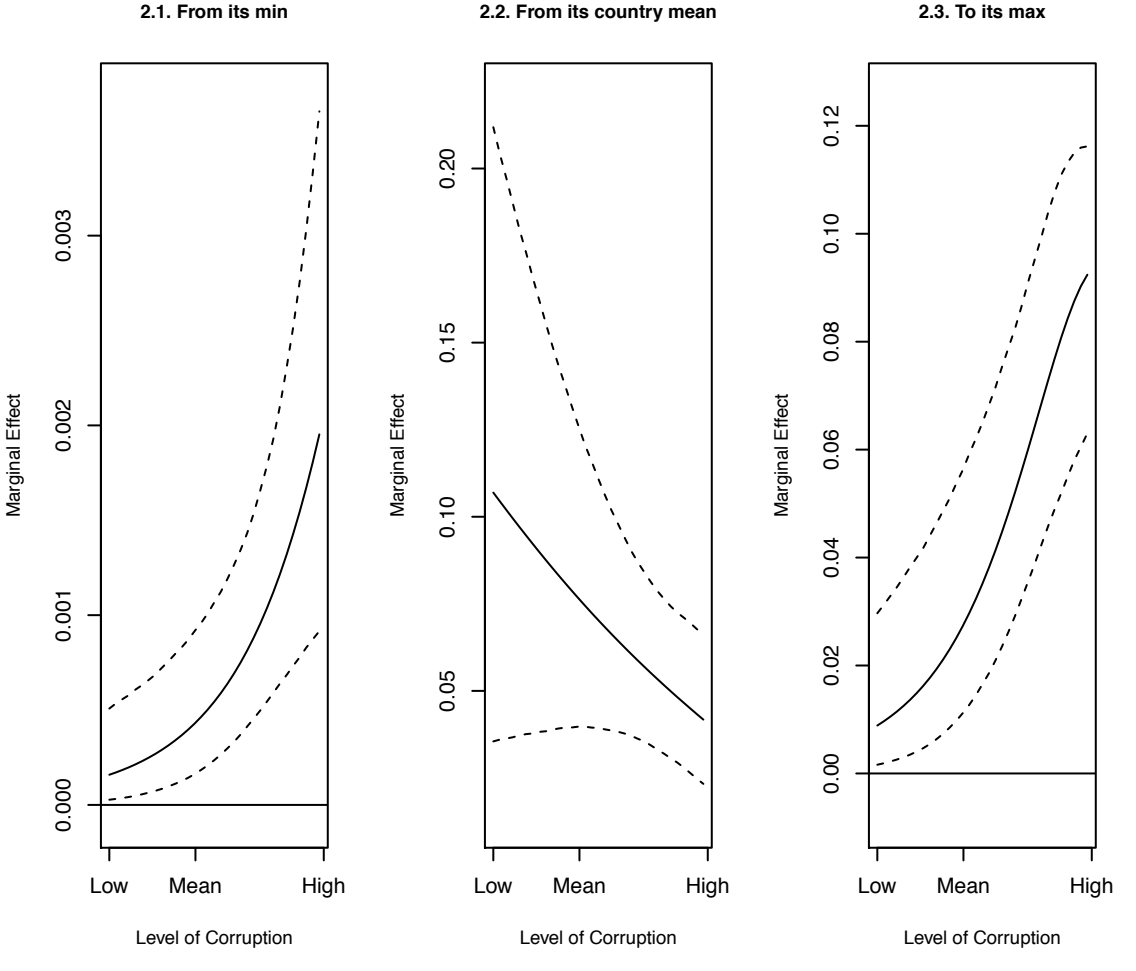


Figure 3. Ideological vote across the observed range of corruption

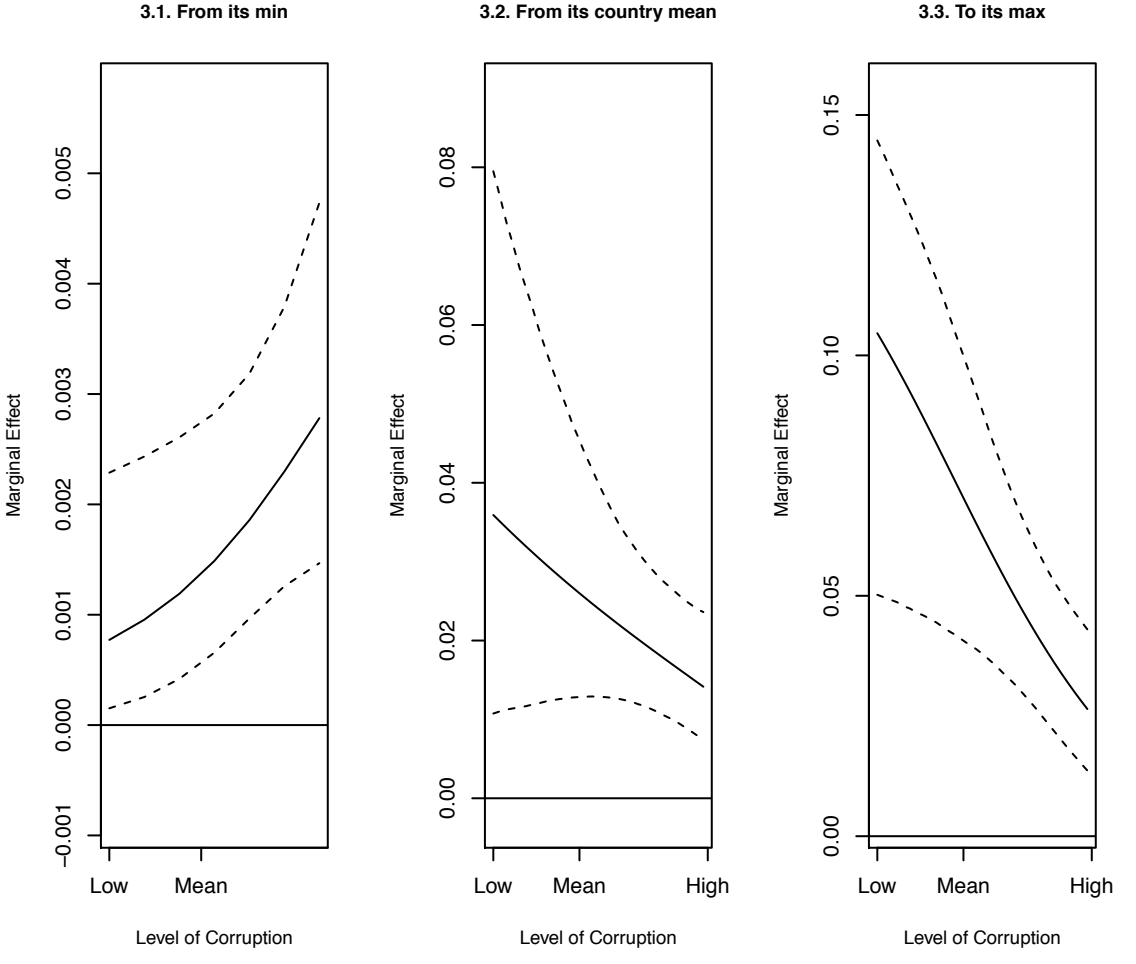


Figure 4. Party effects across the observed range of perceptions of corruption

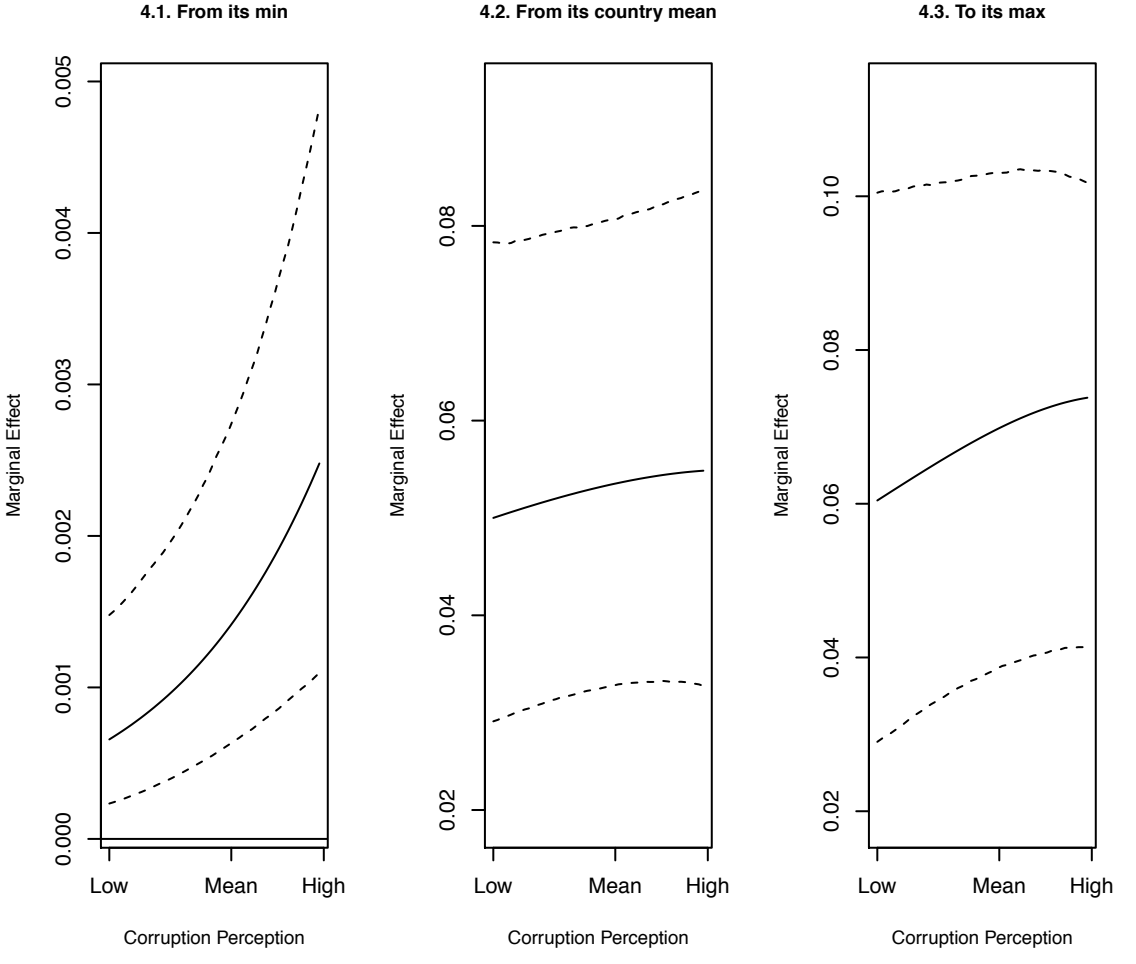


Figure 5. Leader effects across the observed range of corruption

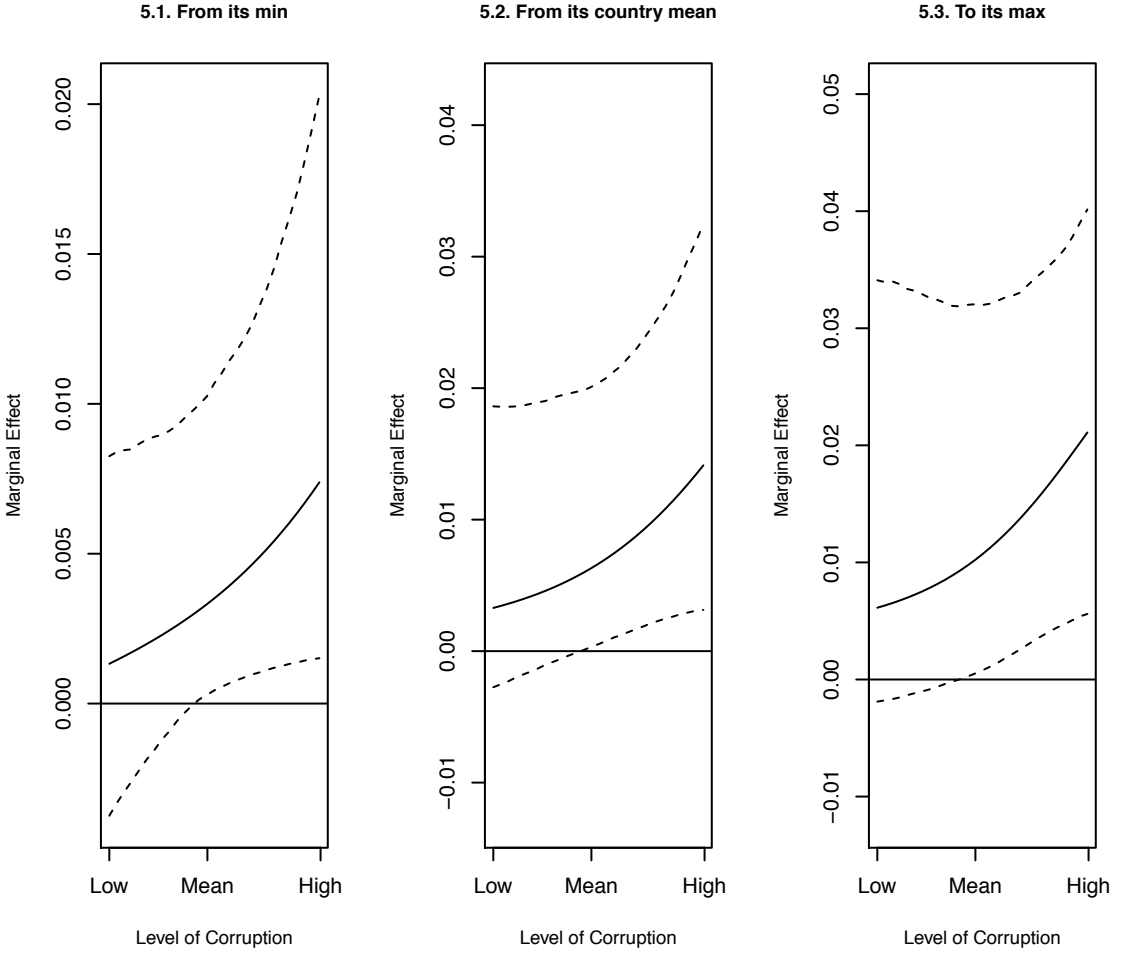
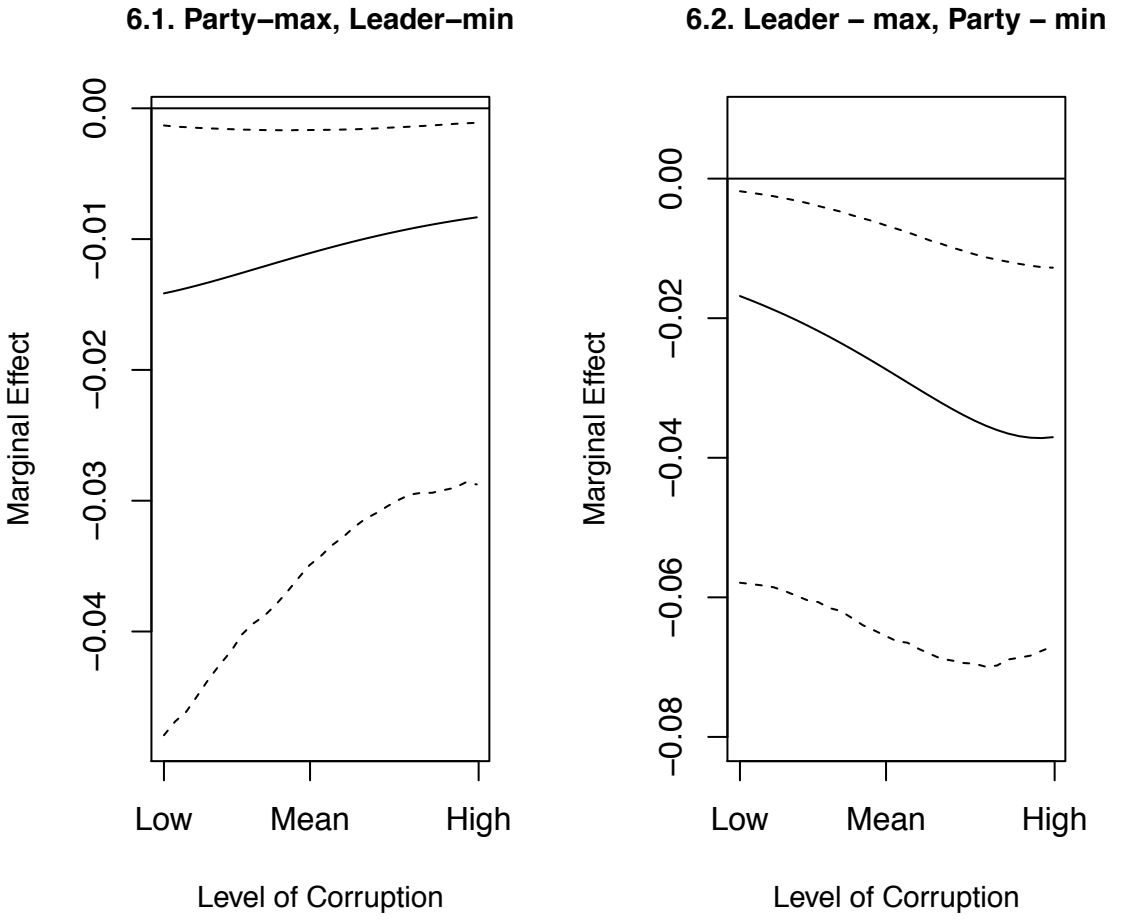


Figure 6. Leader vs. party advantage across the perceptions of corruption



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