

Dissertation Summary

Quantitative, and to a much lesser degree qualitative, research is the dominant approach to corruption. However, the call to investigate the contextual dependencies of corruption is brought about by the failure of anti-corruption approaches that do not tackle other actors or institutions and issues simultaneously. One approach that can tackle the complex nature of corruption from this perspective but remains wanting in corruption research is Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). Much more limited is the application of QCA in understanding civil society's anti-corruption role. The supposed place of civil society in anti-corruption is even more compounded by contemporary events that directly assault their presence in countries, regardless of the type of government or economic development in place. This closing of civic space phenomenon is part of the broader democratic backsliding or autocratization that has pervaded even long standing and consolidated democracies.

Locating the place of civil society given such contexts poses a daunting challenge, as one may ask: if democratic grounds are backsliding, where are anti-corruption efforts anchored on? As such, the dissertation intends to look at configurations of (democratic) political institutions that enhance or mitigate corruption while trying to locate the position occupied by civil society in this respect. Taking a cue from the civil society-corruption nexus and the broader democracy-corruption linkage scholarship, with institutionalism as an overarching theory, the dissertation hopes to contribute to the discourse via three related studies.

Results

- The first of these serves as a springboard for the argument that civil society cannot battle corruption all alone. While internal civil society characteristics may have a part in corruption mitigation, through a large-N quantitative analysis, the study highlights the importance of civil society environment, transparency of laws and predictability of enforcement and rigorousness and impartiality of public administration on corruption.
- Noting that the formula derived from regression analyses shows the average net effects of the independent variables, the second study looks at the combinatorial effects of conditions necessary and/or sufficient for the outcome high perceived corruption to occur through fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA).
 - The configurational analysis of 33 episodes of contemporary autocratization from the third wave (1994- 2017) confirm the conditionality of civil society's effects as the condition robust civil society organizations combines with the presence of extensive media freedoms and simultaneously the presence of wide and independent public deliberations to produce the outcome high perceived corruption.
 - The pathway to corruption in these states experiencing autocratization also includes two sufficient conditions: the presence of high political exclusion as well as the absence of sociopolitical integration. No necessary precondition was found for the outcome presence of high perceived corruption.

- Given the pretext of equifinality and multifinality in QCA, the third study extends the second but in the context of 30 democracies that did not experience substantial autocratization episodes in the same given period.
 - The results are interesting although not surprising under the theoretical underpinnings of QCA: the absence of high perceived corruption in non-autocratizing states is not brought about by robust civil society organizations (in their presence or absence; or individually or in combination with other conditions) but instead by the presence of wide and independent public deliberations combined with the absence of high political exclusion. The latter is also a necessary condition for the outcome of interest.
 - While the conditionality of civil society's effect is confirmed in the second study, the third highlights the possibility of the differential impacts of civil society depending on context. Limitations of the dissertation are discussed and venues for future research are presented.