Political corruption and democracy in contemporary Brazil

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Abstract

The government of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva was affected by a serious corruption scandal involving its handling of its parliamentary support, its political party and its senior ministers in 2005. Accusations were leveled by the leader of one of the main parties forming part of the governing coalition during the president's first mandate. In spite of this, Lula was re-elected in 2006. It is clear that although it is a questiona that affects the public perception of politics, it is not an issue that mobilizes voters to hold governments responsible and answerable to society. This article contends that, whichever the cause is, it is a consequence, alongside other determinants of corruption, of Brazilian political culture; it implies that corruption affects public's perceptions about the quality of democracy in the country. The study tests this hypothesis empirically, along with others derived from competing approaches.

Key Words: Democracy, political corruption, accountability and quality of democracy.

O governo de Luis Inácio Lula da Silva enfrentou um sério escândalo de corrupção envolvendo o seu esquema de apoio parlamentar, o seu partido político e alguns dos seus principais ministros em 2005. As acusações partiram do líder de um dos principais partidos que formavam a coalização governista no primeiro mandato do presidente. Apesar disso, Lula foi reeleito em 2006. Ainda que afete a percepção pública sobre a política, a corrupção não parece mobilizar os eleitores brasileiros a cobrar responsabilidade e responsividade dos governos. Este artigo argumenta que, qualquer que seja a sua causa, ao lado de outros determinantes da corrupção, isso é uma conseqüência também da cultura política; a premissa é que a corrupção afeta a percepção do público a respeito da qualidade da democracia no país. O estudo testa esta hipótese empiricamente, assim como aquelas que derivam de abordagens concorrentes.

Keywords: Democracia, corrupção política, *accountability* e qualidade da democracia.

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Introduction

In 2005 the government of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva was affected by a serious political crisis caused by a corruption scandal involving its handling of its parliamentary support, its own political party and its senior ministers. Accusations were leveled by the leader of one of the main parties forming part of the governing coalition during the president's first mandate[2]. In spite of this, Lula was re-elected in 2006 with more than 60% of the votes, suggesting some possibilities: 1. the majority of Brazilian electors did not know the facts, 2. whether informed or not, the majority did not believe that the president was involved, or 3. the majority did not view "the misuse of public funds for private gain"[3] as an unwarranted act which merited electoral reaction, even though voting is the most direct means for holding governments responsible and answerable to electors. This paper contends that, whichever the cause may have been, it is a consequence, alongside other determinants of corruption, of Brazilian political culture.

Political corruption is one of the most serious and complex problems faced by both new and old democracies. Basically, it involves abuse of public office for any kind of private benefit, including advantages gained by governing parties to the detriment of the opposition. It damages, moreover, the principle of political equality which is inherent to democracy, as its beneficiaries may be able to obtain or keep political advantages out of proportion to those they might have gained by legitimate means. Moreover, it also results in a weakening of both the legitimacy and quality of democracy by violating the principle that in this type of government no-one is above the law and contributes to a hollowing out of the mechanisms whereby governments may be held accountable - vertical, social and horizontal accountability (O'Donnell, 1999).

To be effective, vertical accountability depends on voters being aware that they have the right and the duty to make sure political leaders remain within the boundaries of strict republican rules and punish them if they go beyond. There are two basic requisites of this type of accountability. Firstly, voters need to be capable of recognizing that corruption exists, whenever it does. Nor is it sufficient to argue – as political, intellectual and cultural leaders did in Brazil in 2005 and 2006 – that all political leaders are corrupt and therefore corruption is justified because most politicians practice it. To do so discredits democracy because to accept this position excludes the possibility of political change. Voters, furthermore, need to be capable of evaluating to some degree, the political impact of corruption in order to decide whether they want to hold those involved to account by any of the democratic means of sanction, namely, elections, legal or judicial procedures, impeachment, denunciations, protests, etc.

Academic research of political corruption has been concerned mainly with factors that

[2] In an interview to the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, on 6 June, 2005, member of Congress Roberto Jefferson, president of PTB, the Partido Trabalhista do Brasil, stated that parliamentary allies of the government of President Lula were being paid a so-called "mensalão" of R$ 30,000 by the President's party in exchange for voting for the government. He confirmed these statements on 8 and 14 June to a Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry (CPI) set up to investigate the claims. He added that his party had received R$ 3 million from the party of the President to cover election costs of the year before.

[3] This is the most usual definition of political corruption. See Treisman (2000).

are generally supposed to lead to it to becoming embedded in a political system - economic progress, corporate plans, the psychological profile of the players, government performance etc. Insofar as these factors are relevant, up to now, however, with few exceptions (Seligson, 2002; Treisman, 2000; 2007) research has dealt only indirectly with the relationship between the abuse of public power, the way voters see it and the effects it has on the quality of democracy. The role of values and political culture on the acceptance or justification of corruption has been neglected, even though its impact on a wide range of civil, political and business practices has been increasingly explored in the literature (Hofstede, 1997; Inglehart, 2002; Inglehart and Wezel, 2005; Shin, 2005; Klingemann, 1999).

This study then focuses on the relationship between a cluster of cultural and institutional variables, such as political perceptions, religious beliefs, interpersonal confidence, satisfaction with democracy, interest and access to political information, the relationship of voters to parties and parliament and the influence of political leaders – and the perception and/or acceptance of corruption by the voters. New knowledge on this subject is gained from an explanation of how voters come to evaluate corruption in their countries and how much these perceptions and convictions affect their support for governments, public institutions and democracy. The study also includes indicators of economic development (evaluation of the economy, levels of education, the geographical locality of those interviewed) and the usual socio-demographic variables.

It is divided into four sections. The first looks at the results of some recent studies of corruption in Latin America and discusses, from a comparative perspective, the extent to which general international indices of the perception of corruption and the individual views of Latin Americans are compatible. The second, based on data from a number of surveys, evaluates first the extent of corruption in Brazil in the eyes of the public and second the influence of political culture on those perceptions in recent years. The third deals with indicators of social acceptance of corruption in Brazil, its determinants and effects. Finally, in the last section, the significance of these perceptions for the quality of democracy in the country is considered.

Corruption in Latin America and in Brazil

Accusations of corruption have been frequent in various Latin American countries in recent decades. In the case of Brazil, the accusations against the Lula government in 2005 were widely publicized in the media, investigated by the Federal Police and are subject to legal process in the Supreme Federal Tribunal, entered into at the request of the National Prosecuting Counsel, against 40 persons. Among those accused are an ex-president, an ex-secretary general, and a former party treasurer of the governing party, as well as other parties in the governing coalition, including some important figures of the government in the period, such as José Dirceu, former government Chief of Staff, Antonio Palocci, former Treasury Secretary and Luiz Gushiken, former Communications Secretary to the President. All have had to stand down from their posts as a consequence of these accusations and the fallout from them.

The scandals - which were responsible for one of the most serious political crises the country has experienced since democratization – were preceded by similar cases in the early

90s, such as the impeachment of ex-president Fernando Collor de Mello and the resignation of a number of members of the Parliamentary Budget Commission. Since 2005 there has been a succession of other cases, involving other State ministers, members of the judiciary, party leaders and members of the National Congress such as the former and present presidents of the Federal Senate[4]. Corruption then appears to be almost endemic and out of control in Brazil. So far the political system has been unable to tackle it in an effective way (Taylor, 2007; Chaia and Teixeira, 2001; Speck, 2000).

But Brazil is not unique in Latin America. Since democratization in the region, corruption scandals in recent decades have hit countries such as Argentina under Carlos Menem, Peru under Alberto Fujimori and Alan Garcia, Mexico under José Lopez Portillo and Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Ecuador under Abdala Bucaram and Venezuela with Rafael Caldera and Carlos Andrés Pérez. All these cases have had major public repercussions as they involved key figures in the political system, but countless others have been reported in the media in various countries on the continent, indicating that other areas of public administration and state bureaucracy, like city halls, state governments and local parliaments are also rife with corruption (Canache and Allison, s/d.; Power and González, 2003; Weyland, 1998).

Based on this evidence, some analysts have suggested that corruption has increased in Latin America in the last 20 years precisely because of democratization. Others, however, have said that the establishment of democracy has produced positive results in controlling corruption by introducing more accountability and transparency into public policy decision-making processes. Weyland (1998), for example, attributes the supposed increase in corruption on the continent to three factors: firstly, the opportunities – more than the incentives – created by the dispersion of power which has followed democratization, which has allowed a large number of public officials to swap favors in exchange for private benefits (whether financial or not); secondly the wave of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s, during which the power of politicians to make decisions about state-owned companies increased, creating new opportunities to bargain advantages from those interested in buying them as part of the process of privatization; and finally Weyland attributed some of the growth in corruption to the emergence of new forms of personal or charismatic leadership by political leaders who moved beyond political parties and interest groups, coming to power in their respective countries by mobilizing the general population through television. The use of television in electoral campaigns has become widespread as a result of democratization of the access to mass media, but supposedly it requires the investment of large amounts of money which can only be obtained in exchange for promises of favors to possible private sponsors[5]; in other words, in order to make available sufficient resources required by these personal and charismatic leaders, party managers were obliged to resort to what was euphemistically referred to in Brazil as "non-accountable electoral expenses", that is, to the use of private funds which could not be officially declared because they were illegal.

[4] Cases of corruption following the example of the alleged unauthorized use of private resources by Senators Renan Calheiros and José Sarney, the so-called "mafia of the ambulances", executive expenses using corporate credit cards, etc. For a complete list of recent cases see *www.estadao.com.br* and *www.folhaonline.com.br*.

[5] Delúbio Soares, former treasurer of the Partido dos Trabalhadores, described this form of illegal funding used by the party in the electoral campaigns of 2002 and 2004, among which were funds intended for use in the scheme of the "mensalão" (a monthly "amount" paid to members of the National Congress in return for their political support).

Although he recognizes that denunciations of scandals involving the unauthorized use of public funds is a sign of progress in countries which have long suffered from endemic corruption, as they show signs of pressure in civil society for the establishment of democratic standards of political behavior, Weyland's study is speculative and does not offer the empirical tests required to prove his assertions. Apart from which, the first two factors he mentions are, to a certain extent unappealable as devolution of power is part of the establishment of democracy, whose principles differentiate it from competing systems precisely because it constitutes an alternative to the institutional concentration of power. In this sense decisions to be taken in the economic field relative to the break-up of public monopolies and consequent privatization are not *per se* the original source of corruption, but they do reveal the lack of effective judicial or institutional checks capable of controlling such abuses. Weyland's analysis suggests, moreover, that there is something lacking in the democratization process which might prevent corruption from becoming endemic, but many studies show that the performance of politicians and public institutions in many democracies recently in this respect leaves much to be desired (Shin, 2005).

Analyses such as Weyland's reiterate theories according to which corrupt practices, although they also exist in more developed countries, are more general and widespread in less developed societies and those undergoing a process of development. But, although other studies also show that corruption increased in the countries of eastern Europe after democratization and the introduction of a market economy (Hessel and Murphy, 2000), one wonders whether these cases may not be pointing, as has recently been suggested (Husted, 1999) and Power and González (2003), to a more complex nature of the phenomenon, which needs to take into account factors which up to now have been little considered in the usual explanatory models, for example the values and cultural traditions which in many countries justify corruption. Weyland's own third factor for explaining the increase of corruption in Latin America, namely the presence of personal and charismatic leadership which encourages corrupt behavior, points in this direction. A long tradition of governments involving personalization of power relationships has been described by the literature as populist or neopopulist, implying both a direct relationship between political leaders and electors and devaluation of the institutions set up to control abuses such as political parties and representative institutions. Although different of the populist governments of the 40s and 50s, cases of neopopulism in Latin America exemplify these aforementioned distortions (Carneiro, 2009; Seligson, 2002).

Husted (1999), and Power and González (2003) are among the first schollars in recent years to examine the role of political culture in explaining corruption, using both aggregated and individual data in comparative studies. Power and González included cultural variables in their analytic models and showed that, while economic development continues to be an important predicator of corruption, the empirical data shows that, whether directly or indirectly, culture also explains the phenomenon. They also maintain that an effective way of looking at both the effect of economic development and democratic structures would be to consider the lagged effects of culture, which indirectly influence the tendency of some societies to adopt corrupt practices. The present study follows this line of research by looking to the relationship between political culture and perceptions of corruption.

Research Design And Methodology

Different groups of data have been used in this study to test hypotheses derived from the literature. Firstly, the compatibility of aggregated international indices of perception of corruption with individual responses by members of the Latin American public was tested. These procedures were necessary to allow the research to test the following specific hypotheses: 1. Indicators of political culture as well as those of development and institutional performance are important, to different degrees, in explaining the aggregated indices of perception of corruption in Latin America and Brazil in recent years. 2. The indices of perception of corruption in Brazil show that a) Brazilians were aware of the existence of the problem in the country, b) perception of corruption has increased as a result of recent accusations, for example the case of the "mensalão" under the Lula government and c) social acceptance of corruption in Brazil influences factors related to the quality of democracy.

The source of data for aggregated international indices of corruption is Transparency International and for the other aggregated political and institutional indicators, Freedom House; for public perceptions of corruption in countries at different stages of development the World Values Survey, between 1995 and 2002; for Latin America, the Latinobarometro between 2002 and 2004; for Brazil, Datafolha between 2005 and 2006 as well as researches carried out by the author between 1993 and 2006[6]. The explanatory variables in the study are, on the one hand, indicators of development, institutional performance and political culture compared with public perceptions of corruption in Latin America and Brazil. On the other, attitudes and opinions of Brazilians towards corruption compared with different political indicators such as confidence in public institutions, democratic style government and political participation. The units of observation, analysis and inference used are the individual ones. The tests carried out involve descriptive statistical and regression analyses.

The main results

Compatibility between aggregated international indices of perception of corruption and replies at the individual level by country[7]

In the face of objections about the validity of indicators such as the Index of Perceived Corruption (IPC), the first tests carried out aimed to verify, on the one hand, if there is any correlation between this index aggregated by country and replies at an individual level to national or regional surveys, and on the other, if there is a correlation, whether the position varies in different countries. The first test showed that Pearson's correlation between the two indicators is significant at the level .001 and the association is .90 (r2 adjusted is .81). This shows that the position of authors who criticize the use of these indices is not sustainable;

[6] The research projects "Political Culture and Democratization" and "Citizens' Mistrust of Democratic Institutions" (and their respective surveys in 1993 and 2006), were coordinated by José Álvaro Moisés (the latter in partnership with Rachel Meneguello of Unicamp) and financed by FAPESP, CNPq and the Ford Foundation.

[7] Because of space limitations, some survey results have not been included. These may be obtained on request from the author at *jamoises@usp.br* .

in other words, the corruption perceived by specific sectors as obtained by organizations such as Transparency International finds a resonance among general Latin American public opinion. A test was then carried out to see if there was any link between the IPC by country, according to the Transparency International, and perception of corruption at an individual level for different countries and for Latin America, according to surveys by World Values Survey and the Latinobarometro. The data partially confirmed the developmental hypothesis. On the one hand, in democracies at the highest level of development both segmented groups and the public at large had low levels of perception of corruption, while the opposite was true for many countries at an intermediate level of development such as Spain and South Korea, but most of all at the lowest level of development such as in the Latin American nations. On the other hand, even countries with a moderate level of development in Latin America are classified as corrupt (data not shown here).

Determinants of perception of corruption in Latin America

In the next step both the aggregated indices and those derived from surveys of the general population in 18 Latin American countries of perception of corruption were taken as dependent variables and submitted to a categorical regression analysis (optimal scaling procedures in the SPSS) in which explanatory variables, apart from being indicators of economic, social and political development, were also different indicators of political culture. The procedure consisted of testing 11 models, keeping the same control variables but with the introduction every time of different variables either of political culture or competing hypotheses, apart from those referring to economic performance in those countries according to interviewees. The results are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1

MODELS OF CATEGORICAL REGRESSION OF ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF VARIABLES OF POLITICAL CULTURE ON THE TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL INDEX OF PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION IN 18 LATIN-AMERICAN COUNTRIES (2004) CONTROLLED BY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS (*PER CAPITA* GNP, GINI, CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES)

Model	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		11	
Variable	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Beta*	*Sig.*
Interpersonal confidence	-,008	,964																				
Institutional confidence			-,553	,001*																		
Toleration o f non-democratic government					,116	,723																
Preference for a democratic regime							-,579	,019**														
Preference for an authoritarian regime									,472	,005*												
Indifference about regime type											,237	,333										
Catholics													,253	,168								
Protestants															,000	,651						
Economic situation of the country																	-,128	,583				
Economic situation of the interviewee																			-,144	,555		
Economic situation of the interviewee in the previous year (2003)																					,213	,400
Per capita GNP	,043	,848	,253	,103	,108	,708	,263	,174	,048	,769	,141	,529	-,127	,560	-,031	,897	,120	,649	,165	,553	-,084	,739
GINI	,244	,180	,346	,014***	,209	,310	,038	,809	,339	,021	,125	,532	,272	,115	,270	,141	,292	,139	,282	,162	,130	,556
Civil liberty	,943	,037	,701	,020**	,897	,051	1,228	,003*	,838	,016**	1,029	,021	,756	,069	,903	,042	,966	,032	,953	,033	,969	,028
Political freedom	-,200	,637	,029	,917	-,187	,657	-,681	,088	-,204	,364	-,335	,433	-,140	,723	-,197	,639	-,104	,642	-,142	,744	-,310	,474
R2 adjusted	,514		,793		,519		,700		,729		,550		,572		,520		,526		,526		,543	
N		*18*		*18*		*18*		*18*		*18*		*18*		*18*		*18*		*18*		*18*		*18*

Source: Latinobarometro (2004); Freedom House (2004); Transparency International (2004); World Bank (2004); PNUD (2004). Level of significance: *p < 0,005, **p < 0,2, ***p < 0,1.

NB: The regression model used was Optimal Scaling Procedures for categorical data by SPSS. The Transparency International index of perception of corruption has been inverted so that its values go from less to more. For variables of political culture percentages have been used (Catholics. Protestants, Preference by regime type and toleration of non-democratic government). For the remaining variables. nation l averages have been used (Interpersonal and Institutional Confidence, Economic situation of the country, of the interviewee and of the interviewee the previous year (2003). Countries included in the analysis were Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador,Ecuador. Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama. Paraguay,Peru. Rep. Dominican, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Relevant models are 2, 4 and 5, those showing the effect of variables of confidence in institutions, preference for democracy, preference for authoritarianism, index of civil liberty (according to Freedom House) and Gini's coefficient; their explanatory value is .79, .70 and .73 respectively. The model with the highest explanatory value is that according to which one of the principal determinants of perception of corruption is voter confidence in public institutions. The beta of institutional confidence is .56 with a sign in the right direction, indicating that those who have less confidence in democratic institutions see corruption more often as part of the political system. In this model the Gini coefficient also has explanatory force, but the beta is less than that for institutional confidence, namely .34. Another important finding: the role of the index of civil liberty whose beta is .70, showing that perception of corruption in Latin America is determined as much by cultural values as by aspects of the performance of government which affect the quality of democracy. Model 4, although with lower explanatory force than the previous ones, completes the picture for determinant variables of perception of corruption. Preference for democracy and once again the index of civil liberty are the two explanatory variables whose betas are respectively 0.57 and 1.22. Finally Model 5 shows that the determinants for perception of corruption are preference for authoritarianism and, again, the index of civil liberty. Within the limits of the exploratory nature of the analysis, the factors determining negative perception, namely that corruption exists and affects Latin American political systems, are political culture and institutional design.

Perception and effects of corruption in Brazil

The next step was to examine the results of research carried out as a result of the accusations made about the "mensalão" under the Lula government (Datafolha, 2005 and those done by the author in 1993 and 2006). The aim was to check levels of awareness and perception of corruption by Brazilians at the time the accusations were made and, at the same time, based on an indicator of long-term memory, to compare these perceptions at two points in time, 1993 and 2006, in other words one year after the two most notorious recent cases, namely that of Collor de Mello in 1992 and Lula da Silva in 2005. Comparison was also made with perception of previous governments, those of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Itamar Franco and military rule. The results are summarized as follows.

TABLE 2
AWARENESS, ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS CONCERNING THE "MENSALÃO" – 2005

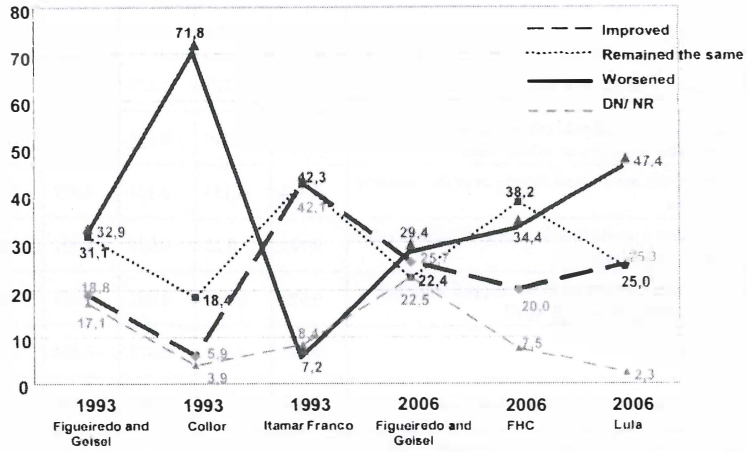
	JUNE	JULY
"Are you aware of the accusing surrounding the "Mensalão"? If yes:		
Are you well informed?	16,60%	19,30%
Are you reasonably well informed?	42,20%	38,00%
Are you poorly informed?	15,80%	17,70%
Have no awareness	25,30%	25,00%
N	**2124**	**2110**
"From what you know or have heard, are there any cases of corruption in the Lula government?"		
Yes there are	70,50%	78,00%
No there are not	17,00%	11,70%
Don't know / Would not say	12,50%	10,30%
N	**2124**	**2110**
"If the Partido dos Trabalhadores paid the "Mensalão", was President Lula involved or not in this supposed payment to members of Congress in exchange for supporting the government?"		
Lula was involved	.	33,50%
Lula was not involved	.	43,40%
Don't know / Would not say	.	23,10%
N	**.**	**1841**
"In your opinion, does President Lula carry a lot of responsibility, some responsibility or no responsibility for these cases of corruption?"		
A lot of responsibility	28,10%	28,40%
Some responsibility	50,40%	45,90%
No responsibility	14,50%	15,20%
Don't know / Would not say	6,90%	10,50%
N	**2124**	**1866**
"In your opinion, has the performance of the Lula government in relation to these payments to members of Congress in return for parliamentary support been:"		
Excellent/Good	28,50%	31,10%
Fair	34,80%	32,50%
Poor/ Very Poor	23,30%	26,00%
Don't know / Would not say	13,40%	10,40%
N	**2124**	**2110**

Source: Datafolha, 2005.

Firstly, two points stand out. The majority of those interviewed (58%) were not only

aware of the corruption accusations involving the government in 2005, but also believed that the president held "a lot of" or "some" responsibility for the facts (78%), although more than 40% thought that he was not directly involved. Nevertheless, as can be seen from the graph below, those interviewed in 1993 and 2006 thought that the corruption situation in the country had worsened under both Collor and Lula governments, when compared to their predecessors. In spite of strong differences between these governments, the continuing perception of corruption confirms its endemic character in Brazil.

GRAPH 1
THE CORRUPTION SITUATION IN 1993 AND 2006



Sources: Research "Cultura Política e Democratização" (1993); "A Desconfiança dos Cidadãos das Instituições Democráticas" (2006).

Insofar as voters were aware of the facts surrounding the case and the responsibility of the Lula government in the 2005 scandals, this did not affect the vote of the majority in the presidential elections of 2006. This has important implications for the effectiveness of mechanisms of vertical accountability in the country. Although the previous data were taken from different surveys, the hypothesis that social acceptance of corruption in the country offers a point of connection between the results of both needs to be verified. What can explain public leniency towards corruption or even its social acceptance and what are the effects of this?

A battery of questions concerning the possibility of corruption being socially acceptable in situations in which governments and political leaders are seen as competent to meet voters' needs and expectations were used in the 2006 survey and taken as the basis for forming a

scale of social acceptance of corruption[8]. The test consisted of a linear regression analysis involving a cluster of independent variables associated with the aforementioned hypotheses. The idea in this case was to find out what were the determinants of this acceptance. The

TABLE 3
LINEAR REGRESSION (OLS) OF SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF CORRUPTION
(HE'S A THIEF BUT HE GETS THINGS DONE) - 2006

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES REMAINING IN THE MODEL	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*	*T*	*Sig.*
(Constant)	1,532	0,215		7,136	0,000
Northern, Central West and Northeast Regions	1,268	0,123	0,229	10,302	0,000
The government should cut public services like health and education to reduce taxes	1,137	0,219	0,120	5,200	0,000
The less the government interferes in the economy the better	0,718	0,155	0,107	4,627	0,000
The country would function better if military rule were re-established	0,564	0,15	0,085	3,691	0,000
Brazil would be better off we stopped worrying about making everybody equal	0,574	0,142	0,092	4,031	0,000
Female	-0,423	0,121	-0,077	-3,504	0,000
Positive opinion of the Lula government	0,438	0,127	0,080	3,464	0,001
If the country is to grow, the government needs to intervene less in the economy	-0,420	0,147	-0,063	-2,852	0,004
Level of Education: College or Higher	-1,028	0,379	-0,060	-2,714	0,007
Positive evaluation of future family economic situation	-0,405	0,145	-0,063	-2,794	0,005
Trust the National Congress	0,290	0,137	0,047	2,111	0,035
Prefer democracy to other alternatives	-0,279	0,133	-0,048	-2,103	0,036

Dependent Variable: Scale of tolerance for corruption (He's a thief but he gets things done)
Source: "A Desconfiança dos Cidadãos das Instituições Democráticas" (2006).

[8] The scale of social acceptance of corruption (He's a thief, but he gets things done) was constructed based on the following 2006 surveys: "I'm going to read some statements about politicians and I'd like to know if you strongly agree, partly agree, partly disagree or strongly disagree: *It doesn't matter if a politician steals or not, what matters most is that he gets things done in the public interest; a politician who gets a lot done but steals a little deserves to get the public's vote; a politician who gets a lot done should be able to use public funds to finance his electoral campaign; the best politicians are those who get a lot done but steal a little*". Cronbach's alpha in the scalability test is 0.91. For an explanation of how the scale was constructed, see Appendix 1.

analysis confirms the main hypothesis of this study, namely that social acceptance of corruption in Brazil is determined by factors related to development, the performance of institutions and governments, as well as political culture. Firstly, it can be seen that in the regions of the country with lower levels of development the idea that "He's a thief, but he gets things done" is more acceptable, less so in the Southeast and the South. A similar result is obtained for lower levels of education (income levels and factors associated with size of cities in which interviewees live, however, are not significant). At the same time, positive evaluation of the Lula government and – in contradiction to the hypothesis concerning the performance of institutions – also the National Congress are factors that explain social acceptance of corruption. Another contradictory aspect emerges from this evaluation. Those who expect the economy to do better in the coming year do not follow the trend of those who evaluate the government and representative institutions positively. Finally, the results for variables of political culture and values show that, as expected, adherence to democracy or rejection of authoritarian alternatives are associated – as indications of tendency expected – with social acceptance of corruption. In the regression model advanced, variables which show the viewpoint of those interviewed concerning the role of the State in tackling social and economic inequality were also used. Those sectors which hold more conservative positions are also those who showed most support for "He's a thief, but he gets things done." In a word, social acceptance of corruption in Brazil today is greatest among those who live in less developed regions economically, who are politically more authoritarian, socially more conservative and who have, at the same time, a positive evaluation of the government of the day.

The second question, which the study sought to address, concerns the effects of acceptance of corruption on the democratic system. Does such acceptance in any way affect adhesion to democracy among those interviewed? Are interpersonal and institutional confidence or political participation also factors? These questions are relevant for the debate of culturalist and institutionalist approaches on the subject and are important for the quality of democracy. For this reason correspondent dependent variables underwent a logistic regression analysis in a model in which the extent of social acceptance of corruption ("he's a thief but he gets things done") and different variables of evaluation of the government of the day, its policies and the economy – taken as explanatory variables – were maintained as controls, alongside socio-demographic variables. Results are summarized in Table 4 below.

Most notably the data show that social acceptance of corruption negatively affects adherence to democracy, whereas voting for Lula in 2002, a higher level of education and policy evaluation in general have a positive influence on diffuse support for the government. But this negative influence on adherence to democracy is confirmed by the effects of acceptance of corruption on opinions relating to the possibility of presidents and governments bypassing the law and institutions like the National Congress and political parties in times of crisis, and in one of these cases, a vote for Lula in 2002 also influences these opinions, as does preference for a charismatic leader who would "sort the country's problems out". Acceptance of corruption is also positively linked to alternatives such as a return of military rule or the adoption of a one party state. In this last case a vote for Lula had the opposite effect. Those sectors which accept corruption as a fact of political life in the country tend to adopt more authoritarian positions, but not when they have a positive evaluation of national politics and, in some cases, the economy.

As expected, those sectors which do not accept corruption have superior education, higher income and are older. Some of these sectors also reject authoritarianism, have more interpersonal trust and show more interest in taking part in public life. Social acceptance of corruption does not affect, however, satisfaction with the practical performance of democracy, a factor which should not be confused with normative adherence to the regime (Moisés e Carneiro, 2008). Those who are most satisfied with the functioning of democracy are female and Catholic, sectors which, in other situations, show less confidence in institutions and tend to wish to be less involved in politics compared to men and non-Catholics.

As far as perception of civil rights, political participation and evaluation of political parties and the judiciary is concerned, though, the effects of acceptance of corruption are not significant. In these cases, while positive evaluation of the political situation in general and a vote for Lula in 2002 have positive effects, neither the effects of development nor previous socialization affect confidence in institutions. Surprisingly, however, in the case of trade unions, acceptance of corruption is associated with confidence in these same, something which is also affected by a positive evaluation of politics in general.

TABLE 4

LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF CORRUPTION (HE´S A THIEF, BUT HE GETS THINGS DONE) ON ADHESION TO DEMOCRACY, CONFIDENCE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, CONTROLLED BY SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS - 2006

	Prefer democracy as a form of government		Satisfied with democracy in Brazil		In a crisis the government could bypass laws, Congress and institutions		In a crisis, the president could bypass Congress and political parties¡		Brazil would be better if there were only one political party		Try to convince someone of what you think politically	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
Acceptance of corruption (He's a thief, but he gets things done)	- 0,063	0,003	- 0,015	0,564	0,069	0,001	0,061	0,004	0,094	0,000	0,007	0,777
Sex – female	-0,185	0,117	-0,432	0,003	0,016	0,884	-0,005	0,967	0,111	0,356	-0,438	0,002
Age range – 25 to 44	- 0,011	0,925	-0,326	0,029	-0,140	0,215	-0,224	0,047	-0,260	0,032	0,067	0,637
Education – College or Higher	1,291	0,009	-0,164	0,736	0,337	0,322	-0,393	0,252	-0,864	0,058	0,032	0,043
Region – Southeast	-0,271	0,030	-0,742	0,267	-0,090	0,445	0,112	0,343	0,208	0,103	-0,419	0,006
Monthly family income (up to R$ 780)	- 0,122	0,325	0,171	- 0,188	-0,042	0,723	-0,091	0,440	-0,005	0,971	-0,338	0,023
Size of city, more than 500,000	0,032	0,802	-0,300	-0,163	-0,386	0,002	-0,199	0,107	-0,032	0,811	-0,065	0,679
Religion – Catholic	- 0,105	0,399	0,122	-0,053	-0,071	0,547	-0,062	0,601	0,054	0,672	-0,218	0,137
Positive evaluation of the present economy of the country	0,346	0,154	0,146	0,564	-0,133	0,373	-0,326	0,028	-0,115	0,464	-0,183	0,328
Positive current political evaluation of the country	0,256	0,088	0,400	0,120	-0,066	0,636	-0,123	0,375	0,012	0,935	0,168	0,331
Positive opinion of the Lula government	- 0,001	0,995	-0,318	0,227	0,238	0,121	0,392	0,011	0,221	0,173	0,144	0,459
Voted for Lula in 2002	0,327	0,011	0,336	0,117	-0,100	0,421	-0,147	0,233	-0,251	0,055	-0,070	0,651
Nagelkerke R Square	**0,055**		**0,205**		**0,030**		**0,027**		**0,039**		**0,039**	
N	**1340**		**1340**		**1340**		**1340**		**1340**		**1340**	

Continuation	Trust most people		I would give a blank check to a charismatic leader who could solve all the country's problems.		The country would function better if military rule were re-established		Brazilians know how to exercise their rights		Trust in political parties		Positive opinion of the Judiciary		Positive evaluation of trade unions	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
Acceptance of corruption (He's a thief but he gets things done)	-0,023	0,349	0,111	0,000	0,113	0,000	0,035	0,105	0,020	0,432	-0,028	0,209	0.045	0.037
Sex - female	-0,108	0,409	-0,047	0,733	-0,232	0,086	-0,057	0,625	0,019	0,893	0,122	0,304	-0.052	0.659
Age range – 25 to 44	-0,331	0,013	0,043	0,759	-0,105	0,443	0,001	0,991	-0,486	0,001	-0,111	0,351	-0.198	0.093
Education – College or Higher	0,779	0,022	-1,442	0,050	-0,234	0,610	0,225	0,518	-0,369	0,459	0,104	0,766	-0.093	0.794
Region - Southeast	-0,015	0,912	-0,164	0,272	0,129	0,371	0,059	0,638	-0,304	0,052	0,038	0,762	0.077	0.535
Monthly family income (up to R$ 780)	-0,366	0,008	0,103	0,481	0,115	0,420	0,111	0,373	-0,121	0,432	-0,035	0,781	-0.270	0.031
Size of city, more than 500,000	-0,013	0,987	-0,173	0,268	-0,079	0,597	-0,174	0,181	-0,370	0,029	-0,494	0,000	-0.489	0.000
Religion - Catholic	0,014	0,918	-0,016	0,911	0,027	0,851	0,210	0,092	0,086	0,579	0,028	0,822	0.170	0.171
Positive evaluation of the present economy of the country	0,053	0,762	-0,225	0,216	0,011	0,951	0,466	0,003	0,190	0,327	0,855	0,000	0.645	0.000
Positive current political evaluation of the country	0,401	0,012	0,143	0,398	-0,309	0,073	0,491	0,000	0,590	0,000	0,577	0,000	0.560	0.000
Positive opinion of the Lula government	-0,166	0,359	0,066	0,722	-0,147	0,415	-0,129	0,426	0,155	0,449	0,250	0,111	0.118	0.462
Voted for Lula in 2002	0,341	0,020	-0,086	0,572	-0,238	0,103	-0,054	0,675	0,301	0,065	0,081	0,531	0.007	0.957
Nagelkerke R Square	**0,036**		**0,048**			**0,043**		**0,054**		**0,081**		**0,153**		**0.116**
N	**1340**		**1340**			**1340**		**1328**		**1340**		**1340**		**1340**

Source: "A Desconfiança dos Cidadãos das Instituições Democráticas" (2006)

Social acceptance of corruption also affects interpersonal confidence. In this model, only a positive evaluation of politics in general, higher income and a vote for Lula had a positive effect on this variable. At the same time, as far as some indicators of political participation are concerned, the results did not prove the hypothesis that there is a negative influence: social acceptance of corruption has no influence on whether individuals attempt to convince other people of their own political ideas. Women are also less likely to try to convince others of their political beliefs, as are those who live in the Southeast or in a city over 500,000 in size, but higher education had the opposite effect. This shows that political participation needs more research.

Results show, firstly, that although the original model which analyses the effects of social acceptance of corruption involves other dependent variables related to the quality of democracy, only those mentioned above remain in the final analysis. The remainders are not significant. Also, the models' r2 adjusted coefficients are low and the results need to be treated careafully. This does not mean that these results are insignificant, but does show that new studies are needed.

Discussion

The results of this study offer two important conclusions. 1. Different tests have shown that public perception of corruption in Brazil and Latin America is linked with development and the performance of institutions, but also with political culture. These factors also explain the social acceptance of corruption in Brazil. This is an important addition to the sum of knowledge about corruption in relation to democracy. 2. Data also shows that the results of social acceptance of corruption affect the quality of democracy in important ways: reduce adhesion to democracy and, more importantly, encourage the acceptance of authoritarian alternatives which might seek to replace it in times of crisis. Although the likelihood of this latter diminishes with time, the risk it poses may increase if the effects of acceptance of corruption combine with civic mistrust of democratic institutions.

The evidence that corruption weakens mass support for the regime has also been demonstrated by Seligson (2002). In another study the influence on the choice of anti-institutional models of democracy by Latin American and Brazilian voters has been shown by Moisés and Carneiro (2008). Both these studies are confirmed by the data presented here and point to situations where there might be a risk of alternatives to democracy gaining popular support, apart from showing that corruption lowers the quality of democracy in a regime.

In effect, when political leaders or civil servants engage in corrupt practices but are held to account constitutionally by the action of voters, political parties and parliament, the justice ministry or judiciary this is a clear example of the effectiveness of democracy and that the regime is functioning in accordance with its principles. But, on the other hand, if a great number of voters think corruption is an inevitable feature of democratic government (as might have been the case in the Brazilian presidential election of 2006) and not due to the behavior of specif politicians or the functioning of parties and the legislature, this weakens the democratic regime as a means of holding government to account.

Appendices

Methodology of scale construction

The scale of social acceptance of corruption is composed of a number of variables. For each dimension, the degree of simultaneous association of group variables was evaluated in an attempt to reduce dimensionality, which allows the construction of measurements which would facilitate data interpretation and assess the relationship of these measurements to other variables of interest. Where the group variables are continuous, the statistical technique applied was Factorial Analysis (by principal components, for example). Where there are nominal variables, Analysis of Principal Categorical Components (CATPCA no SPSS®) was used. This procedure simultaneously quantifies the nominal variables while reducing the dimensionality of the data. The factors generated by the analysis are correlated and represent the major part of the information of the original variables to be interpreted. While numerical factorial analysis requires a linear relationship between the variables, the procedure of approximating the optimal scales allows the variables to be graduated at different levels, whether nominal, ordinal or numerical. Thus, nominal and ordinal variables are quantified taking into consideration the relationship between them and the number of dimensions required (at least 1). Ordinal variables keep the order of the categorical originals (although the quantification may be inverted) and nominal variables are quantified independently of the category order. So, when the charge sign in the table "Component Loadings" is read, we understand by this the sign of its quantified categories in order to understand the direction of their relationship with the other variables. After factorial analysis relevant to each dimension is performed, the group variables with high loading in each dimension can be established. For each group of variables, in order to test the unidimensionality of the variables, one should proceed to an analysis of reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The formula for the Alpha coefficient is:

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{r}}{1 + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{r}}$$

Where N is the number of items and is the inter-item correlation between them. Thus, when the number of items decreases, Alpha also decreases. In scales such as the acceptance of corruption, there are up to 3 variables in each group. It could happen, therefore, that although a cluster of variables has a strong association, the value of Alpha does not reach an acceptable level (0.70 according to the literature). The scores generated by the SPSS® have an average close to 0 and a variability close to 1. To improve interpretation of the construct, a transformation of the variable was performed, so that the scale varied between 0 (minimum) and 10 points (maximum), and the minimum and the maximum had an appropriate interpretation. Mathematically, if a variable x varies between a and b, then 10*(x-a)/(b-a) varies between 0 and 10.

Variables of the logistic regression model

Dependent:

Scale of acceptance of corruption (He's a thief, but he gets things done) varies between 0 and 10, 0 representing total non-acceptance and 10 total acceptance of corruption.

Independent:

– Size of city: ("up to 20 thousand inhabitants" = 0; "between 20 thousand and 50 thousand inhabitants" + "between 50 thousand and 100 thousand inhabitants" + "between 100 thousand and 500 thousand inhabitants" + "more than 500 thousand inhabitants" = 1)

– Prefer democracy to dictatorship: ("in some circumstances a dictatorship is better than a democratic regime" + "it doesn't matter if the government is a dictatorship or a democracy" = 0; "democracy is always the best form of government" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Prefer dictatorship to democracy: ("democracy is always the best form of government" + "it doesn´t matter if the government is a dictatorhip or a democracy = 0) in some circumstances a dictatorship is better than a democracy" = 1, "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Democracy is always the best form of government: ("tend to disagree" + "strongly disagree" = 0, "tend to agree" + " strongly agree" = 1, "don't know" + "no response" + " neither agree nor disagree" = missing)

– Do you think there is less corruption and traffic of influence under a democracy: ("no" + " not really" = 0, " yes" + " yes, very much so" = 1, "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– The law should always be obeyed: ("tend to disagree" + "strongly disagree" = 0, "tend to agree" + " strongly agree" = 1, "don't know" + "no response" + " neither agree nor disagree" = missing)

– The privatization of state companies has been good for the country: ("tend to disagree" + "strongly disagree" = 0, "tend to agree" + " strongly agree" = 1, "don't know" + "no response" + " neither agree nor disagree" = missing)

– Democracy should include the existence of different political parties: ("no" + " not really" = 0, " yes" + " yes, very much so" = 1, "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Under a democracy there should be equality before the law: ("no" + " not really" = 0, " yes" + " yes, very much so" = 1, "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– In a democracy the courts and the Ministry of Justice should oversee public spending ("no" + "rarely" = 0, "yes" + "yes, normally"= 1), "don't know" + "no response" = missing

– Brazil is fully democratic: ("Brazil is not a democracy" + " it is a democracy but has a lot of problems" + "it is a democracy but has a few problems" = 0, "Brazil is fully democratic" = 1, "don't know what a democracy is" + "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Do you do any work for your community? ("never" + "hardly ever" = 0; "often" + "very often" = 1; "no response" = missing)

– Do people ask your opinion on politics? ("never" + "hardly ever" = 0; "often" + "very often" = 1; "no response" = missing)

– Do you discuss politics with friends? ("never" + "hardly ever" = 0; "often" + "very often" = 1; "no response" = missing)

– Would you try to convince someone of what you think politically? ("no" + "hardly ever" = 0; "often" + "very often" = 1; "no response" = missing)

– Do you work for a party or a candidate? ("no" + "hardly ever" = 0; "often" + "very often" = 1; "no response" = missing)

– Political parties are necessary for progress: ("no" = 0; "yes" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Members of Congress and senators are necessary for progress: ("no" = 0; "yes" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Law courts are necessary for progress: ("no" = 0; "yes" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Ministers are necessary for progress: ("no" = 0; "yes" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– A president of the Republic is necessary for progress: ("no" = 0; "yes" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Do you trust the National Congress? ("no not at all" + "not much" = 0; "yes in general" + "yes very much" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Do you trust the Government? ("no not at all" + "not much" = 0; "yes in general" + "yes very much" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Do you trust the president? ("no not at all" + "not much" = 0; "yes in general" + "yes very much" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Do you have confidence in the legal system? ("no, none" + "not much" = 0; "yes in general" + "yes, a lot" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Positive evaluation of the economic situation in the country today ("very poor" + "poor" + "fair" = 0; "good" + "very good" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Are you close to any political party? ("no, none" + "not very" = 0; "yes" + "very close" = 1; "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

– Elections in Brazil are fair: (" not fair" = 0, "are fair" = 1, "don't know" + "no response" = missing)

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