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Sources of tolerance towards corrupted politicians in Greece: the role of trade offs and individual benefits

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Abstract Reelection of corrupted politicians points to a problem of democratic accountability. Voters do have the chance to 'throw the rascals out', but they do not take it. Employing a survey experiment, we test two popular explanations of why Greek voters fail to effectively sanction corrupt politicians. One is related to the distorting effects of psychological attachment to parties and the second to tradeoffs that seem to come into play when voters weigh the prevalence of corruption against other tangible benefits that they receive from governments and parties, such as lower taxes or clientelistic exchanges. Our findings suggest that collective benefits, such as cutting taxes, outweigh the costs of tolerating political corruption. On the contrary, exclusive provision of goods to specific voters, such as in the case of clientelistic exchanges, seems to be negatively related to support for a corrupt politician and therefore should rather not be regarded as a source of tolerance to corruption, at least not in present time Greece.

Introduction

The adverse consequences of corruption are well documented: corruption stifles economic growth, it undermines trust in institutions and in others and thwarts economic, social and democratic development (Holmberg and Rothstein [1, 2]). Corruption also spans countries with a diverse set of political institutions, ranging from authoritarian regimes to fully fledged democracies [3]. The latter finding has been extensively addressed in various publications (see among others, [4–7]). While the aforementioned scholars, and others, have offered convincing accounts of why this is the case, it is still a troubling finding that democratic institutions can offer such poor Quality of Government outcomes such as a corrupt political elite, bureaucracy and public service.

The recent debt crisis in Europe has sparked a large debate regarding causes and potential solutions to the 'good governance' issue. A third wave democracy, a

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member of the EU since 1981 and part of the Eurogroup, Greece has been the most recent example of a spectacular state failure with a current unemployment rate of 27 % and a debt to GDP ratio of 157 % (roughly 300 billion euros). These statistics partly account for the recent 'downgrading' of the Greek economy to the 'emerging markets' status by the MSCI, a first for a developed country.

In many cases (such as the case of Greece), widespread corruption has been cited as one of the main drivers of state failure that has severe consequences for economic development, social equality and welfare provision. In his first EU summit after the elections of 2009, the Greek PM George Papandreou famously acknowledged the presence of systemic corruption in Greece (FT, 9 December, 2009). This, nevertheless stunning admission, came as no surprise to eurozone partners, observers of Greek politics and Greek citizens alike. While at the moment there is a lot of disagreement at the elite and citizen level (both domestically and abroad) on how Greece will find the path to recovery, there is less controversy regarding the contribution of poor governmental quality to Greece's plight. It is precisely this shared belief that makes Greece an interesting case study for the purposes of this project.

In this paper, we are not concerned with what explains the presence of corruption in Greece per se, but rather we are more interested in testing some of the most prevalent explanations for citizens' *tolerance* towards corruption, or as has been quite aptly put elsewhere 'why do corrupt governments maintain public support?' [8]. So we are not really faced with a 'Why Greece failed?' type of question [9], but rather we are more interested in exploring how come a democratic state, member of the EU and rapidly developing during the 1980s and 1990s, failed to treat a disease whose symptoms (and diagnosis) were evident long before 2009. Our research efforts aim to contribute to a by now buoyant literature that seeks to address questions related to the apparent inability of democratic politics to root out corruption through the embedded accountability mechanisms [8, 10–12].

Employing a survey experiment, we test two popular explanations of why citizens fail to effectively sanction corrupt politicians. One is related to the distorting effects of psychological attachment to parties (i.e. party identification) and the second to tradeoffs that seem to come into play when voters weigh the prevalence of corruption against other tangible benefits that they receive from governments and parties (e.g. lower taxes, clientelistic exchanges). We test these against two different motivations for corrupt activity: those of greed and need [13]. Results suggest that, in both cases, favourable tax policies constraint punishment of corrupt officials. However, we find no effects of partisanship or clientelism. If anything, voters in the clientelism treatment group are slightly less likely to vote for a corrupt incumbent who is also providing clientelistic benefits to his or her constituency. We interpret the latter findings with caution taking into account the current discourse in Greece regarding clientelism and corruption and the recent voter dealignment and collapse of a 40-year strong Greek party system. It is quite a difficult task to find ways to 'treat for clientelism' in an experimental design in a country where the issue has been heavily politicized the last four years. However, a combination of the different findings below suggests that clientelism is also part of the story even if results are not so strong.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we review the literature on political accountability and corruption and present evidence regarding the electoral fates of corrupt elites and the conditional factors that can facilitate/hinder punishment at the polls. We then proceed with an adequately detailed account of the research design that we employed in order to test the relevance of some of these factors in the case of Greece. That section is followed with a review of our findings, and the paper ends with some concluding remarks.

Political accountability and corruption

There is a large body of research on corruption that focuses extensively on causes, consequences and remedies [14]. Well-established explanations are concerned, among others, with transitions to democracy [3, 5, 6], levels of economic development [2, 15–17], opportunities for rent extraction [18], degree of social fractionalisation [19, 20], the origins of the legal system [15] and the rules and regulations that govern public administration and policy [21, 22]. While some of the above factors are relevant to any study on corruption, in this paper we will not engage in an extensive review of these issues. We are rather more interested in what we consider a failure of democratic accountability (in Greece and elsewhere) at least as regards punishing corrupt activity.

For many researchers, solution to corruption (political or otherwise) is, at least in a democratic framework, a matter of accountability. As such, at the systemic level, institutions that enhance accountability are likely to be more effective in combating corruption. The main argument that has been put forward here is that different institutional arrangements (e.g. constitutional arrangements or the electoral formula) provide differential incentives and opportunities to elites to engage in corrupt behaviour and extract rents. Similarly, it provides differential opportunities and incentives to both elites and voters to monitor, and for that matter sanction, corrupt behaviour.

At the constitutional level, the number of veto points is of particular relevance. Presidential and federal systems with increased institutional competition are thought to more effectively constrain corruption and provide fewer opportunities for rent extraction (see [23]; cf. [24]). More nuanced approaches update this line of research by focusing on additional institutions such as district magnitude, electoral formula or ballot structure (see [23, 25–29]).

Other studies focus on the rules that govern elections. Majoritarian systems provide more constrains on corruption as compared to proportional representation (PR) systems [24]. Monitoring difficulties for both voters and political opponents are greater in PR systems as collective action problems for the aforementioned groups are more likely in those settings ([24]: 597).

Under a similar approach, but shifting the focus somewhat from formal institutions, Tavits [30] applies an economic voting idea to corruption and argues that 'clarity of responsibility' is the important feature of a party system that one should focus when exploring how variations in monitoring opportunities is related to variations in corruption. Political contexts that make it easier for voters to assign blame for governmental outcomes (including corruption) are less likely to suffer from public office abuse.

From a democratic accountability perspective, elections, irrespective of the particular institutional configuration, do provide an opportunity for voters to 'throw the (corrupt) rascals out'.[1] Evidence suggests that, more often than not, this is not exactly the case. First, corruption charges do not necessarily hurt reelection prospects and, even if legislators are somewhat punished at the polls, vote losses are still quite modest ([10, 11, 31–34]; but see [35]). This finding holds in a diverse set of cases

[1] As regards systemic opportunities for accountability, Greece checks a number of boxes. Despite having a PR electoral system Greece has been, at least until the early 2000s, an essentially two-party system. Moreover, since the two main parties, social democratic PASOK and conservative ND, alternated in power almost uninterruptedly between 1974 and 2009, clarity of responsibility has been quite high. Context, therefore, in the case of Greece is rather favourable.

spanning countries like the US, the UK, Italy or Spain ([10, 31, 34, 36, 37]; for a review, see [38, 39])

The conditions that have been deemed important in order to justify the (in)ability of voters to punish corrupt politicians come mainly in four parts. The first argument has been covered above and focuses on institutional configuration and monitoring opportunities. Since, as we noted earlier, the case of Greece should be considered as a favourable context in terms of institutions, we will not focus on these in this paper.

Research has also suggested that punishment at the polls is conditional upon the information that voters receive regarding malfeasance or government performance in general [10, 11, 35]. The media obviously play an important role in this process. When corruption is primed as an issue through increased coverage and therefore politicised, it can displace other issues from the political agenda and enhance what one could call 'corruption accountability' [10]. These studies highlight the importance of the visibility of corruption in the news, and the "quality" of information on that issue [11]. The role of information has also been highlighted in a study by Ferraz and Finan [35]. Their findings suggested that local government audits published before elections strongly influence outcomes in local elections. Mayors for whom the audits suggested they had abused the public coffers were severely punished at the polls and 'virtuous' mayors were rewarded with reelection. The findings of Winters and Weitz-Shapiro [40] are similar. Results from a nationwide survey in Brazil suggest that citizens can potentially be inclined to punish corrupt politicians (irrespective of performance) when credible information about corruption is available.

The third line of argument justifiably focuses on psychological attachment to parties and the resulting cognitive dissonance. As is expected, and partly predicted by party identification theory, partisans are more likely to (a) turn a blind eye to corrupt activity and (b) are less likely to even perceive and acknowledge corruption per se, if allegations or proof involve legislators of the party they favour and vice versa [34, 38, 39, 41, 42]. For example, opposition supporters are more likely to perceive corruption than the supporters of the incumbent party [42], while the effect of corruption perceptions on system support is tempered when one focuses on incumbent supporters [41].

The final conditioning factor of the relationship between corruption and punishment is potentially a more realistic, sobering and worrying interpretation of electoral competition. From a rational choice perspective the decision to punish or to reward might involve a tradeoff.[2] Corruption, from a moral standpoint, might always be unjustifiable, but the effects of corruption for individual well being are not immediately apparent. Moreover, corruption is not always a synonym for incompetence or even inefficiency (at least not in the short term). Under this framework, corrupt governments are able to maintain public support not *in spite of* being corrupt, but *because* they are corrupt. Governments and elites who can successfully manipulate and distribute resources to a specific clientele are less likely to be punished at the polls [8, 43]. Even if clientelism is not present, voters might still weigh more heavily

[2] In their seminal work on corruption voting, Rundquist et al. [36] distinguish between material exchanges, such as those involved in clientelistic relationships, and non-material exchanges, such as the fostering of some policies which were most preferred by the voter. The authors use the terms 'explicit' and 'implicit' exchange, respectively; in this paper, we will focus on what they define as 'explicit exchange'.

tangible benefits that they receive from incumbents against any corruption allegation. Evidence shows that economic conditions moderate the relationship between corruption and political support: 'individuals facing bad (good) collective economic conditions apply a higher (lower) penalty to presidential approval for perceived political corruption' ([12]:1)

In this paper, and focusing on the case of Greece, we review the last two of these explanations regarding the inability of voters to effectively sanction corrupt politicians. Through a survey experiment, we examine the reported behaviour and attitudes of three distinct treatment groups. We expect, following the research above, the likelihood of punishment to be attenuated in scenarios involving both rational tradeoffs and psychological attachments [favorable economic policies (hypothesis 1), clientelism (hypothesis 2) and partisanship (hypothesis 3)].

Following some recent developments in corruption research, we are adding a further dimension in our study. That is, we are not only interested in why citizens tolerate corrupt activity but also whether there is any variation in tolerance across different types of corruption. We follow here the distinction made by Bauhr [13] and a similar effort by Klasjna et al. [44]. Contrary to most distinctions regarding corruption which are based on scale (e.g, grand vs. petty), Bauhr [13] makes a dinstiction which is based on motivation. She distinguishes between two types of corruption: that of need versus greed. Need corruption refers to a bribe exchange that springs out of a need to secure something the individual is in any case entitled to (such as health care). Greed corruption on the other hand occurs when the exchange is about securing benefits that the individual is not entitled to (such as securing an award of a state contract). For Bauhr, this is an important distinction because it "can determine important relationships between the government and the governed, including the influence of corruption on institutional trust, *the strength of domestic opposition against corruption* and the effects of increased openness and transparency" ([13]: 69, emphasis added). The implication of Bauhr's suggestions is that, due to the not immediately apparent effects of greed corruption, citizens are likely to appear more tolerant against this type of corruption, while they will be more likely to punish incumbents who drive citizens to engage into need corruption. This distinction is similar (but from a different standpoint) to Klasnja et al.'s [44], who differentiate between sociotropic corruption voting and egocentric corruption voting. According to their findings, individual experiences with corruption (egocentric corruption voting) tend to drive incumbent voting to a greater extent than evaluations about how prevalent corruption is in the economic, social and political life in general (sociotropic corruption voting). We expect, following the research above, the likelihood of punishment to be higher in scenarios involving a bribe exchange for something the individual is entitled to, compared to scenarios referring to an exchange for benefits the individual is *not* entitled to (Hypothesis 4).

Methodology and data

With the above four hypotheses in mind, we conducted the following survey experiment in Greece in April 2013. The basic scenario asked the respondent how likely it will be that he/she would vote for an incumbent mayor of a medium-sized city in a

forthcoming election. Two pieces of information about the mayor's current term in office were provided to all respondents: one regarding his/her effectiveness in office and one regarding corruption. More specifically, all respondents were told that the mayor has been effective in keeping the city clean and that there are certain corruption allegations against the mayor. Half of them were told that the mayor has taken a bribe in exchange for providing a contract to run the canteen at the city's central park (simulating a 'greed corruption' scenario) and half of them were told that the respondent was asked to pay an amount of money to the mayor to speed up the approval of permits for his café (simulating a 'need corruption' scenario) The respondent was asked to choose from an 11-point-scale which ran from 0 (=there is no possibility whatsoever that I will vote for the incumbent mayor) to 10 (=it is absolutely sure that I will vote for the incumbent mayor).[3] By calculating the difference between the 'propensity to vote' (ptv) scores of the two groups, those exposed to the need/pocketbook corruption cue and those exposed to the greed/sociotropic corruption cue, we will in fact test the validity of Hypothesis 4, that is the hypothesis regarding variation in tolerance across different types of corruption.

One fourth of the sample were given no other piece of information; these were, in other words, the control groups (one for each type of corruption) against which each of the treatment groups would be compared. Three-fourths of the sample were randomly assigned to one of six treatments in a 2 × 3 experimental design related to pieces of information that triggered rational tradeoffs and psychological attachments plus the information on the type of corruption described for the case of the control group previously. One-third were told that the effective and corrupted mayor has cut council taxes; one-third were told that the effective and corrupted mayor has promoted a project of offering temporary jobs to unemployed citizens in the municipality services by-passing the usual procedures of hiring employees in the public sector[4]; and one-third were told that the effective and corrupted mayor has been openly supported by the party the respondent has been traditionally voting for. In addition, as previously, half were told that the corruption charge regarded taking a bribe in exchange for the contract and half were told that it regarded taking a bribe to speed up the approval of legal permits. By calculating the differences between the ptv scores of each treatment group against the control group, we will in fact test Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Table 1 shows the eight groups described above, plus the exact size of each group. The wording used in each of the eight hypothetical vignettes shown to the participants is presented in an Appendix.

Note that all respondents were given the same piece of information regarding the mayor's effectiveness in office, since it was strongly believed that, if otherwise, respondents would have easily dismissed the question of how likely it would be to vote for a corrupted mayor as a completely obvious one. Using effectiveness as a treatment would also yield fully expectable differences between the treatment and the control group. By adding the effectiveness factor, all respondents—even those of the

[3] The 'propensity-to-vote' question was used so that we could later on test the 'equality of means' hypotheses for all our treatments against the control group described here.

[4] The vignette intentionally refers to 'a project of offering temporary jobs to unemployed citizens' and not 'to the respondent himself', since it was thought that the latter wording would result in a large number of socially desirable answers against the corrupted politician.

Table 1 Random assignment of the sample to eight groups (two controls+six treatment groups)

Type of corruption	Control groups	Treatment groups		
	Effectiveness+corruption	Favourable economic conditions	Clientelism	Party identification
Greed	Group 1	Group 3	Group 5	Group 7
Need	Group 2	Group 4	Group 6	Group 8

control groups—were actually asked to weigh the one piece of information against the other. Note also that the experimental vignette refers to the respondent personally, and not to any third person as suggested by other researchers (see [44]) to avoid misreporting of corruption experience, because we are interested in recording respondent's own reaction as a proxy for his/her actual behavior and not his or her perceptions of how other respondents would behave.

To sum up, the total size of the sample was 882 individuals over 18 years old. The sample was randomly selected from all over the country and randomly assigned to each of the eight groups; we are therefore assured that all unobservables are equally balanced across different treatment groups [50].

Results

Table 2 shows the results of the survey experiment; that is the results of the *t* test analyses for the differences in the average probabilities to vote for the corrupted mayor for each pair of groups. The average probabilities are in every case low—although not as low as those found in other research of the same kind (i.e. [38])—with a maximum of 3.56 (on a 0–10 scale) for the favourable economic conditions treatment in the case of the greed corruption allegation and a minimum of 2.04 for the clientelism treatment in the case of a mayor accused of taking a bribe to offer a benefit the citizen was entitled to.[5] However, even with this skewed distribution, we see important differences across treatment conditions.

It is the 'favourable economic conditions' mechanism that, in our experiment, appears to have the strongest positive effect, producing a change of 0.76 in the probability to support the mayor in the case of the mayor charged with greed corruption and 0.80 in the case of the mayor charged with the kind of need corruption. The effect is statistically significant in both cases of corruption at a very low significance level, and the difference in the ptv scores is in the expected direction;

[5] Some may consider it quite reasonable that respondents of the 'clientelism treatment' group were less likely than the control group to vote for the corrupted politician; after all, the vignette referred to a system of hiring *unemployed citizens* (not the respondent himself) in the municipality services, by-passing the usual procedures of hiring employees in the public sector. The voter is expected to punish a patronage system *which does not benefit him directly*. However, given the extremely high unemployment rate in Greece nowadays (officially at 28 % in mid-2013), it is reasonable to expect that the respondents will identify themselves or a member of their family as potential beneficiaries of the mayor's network. With this assumption in mind, we consider it striking that respondents of the 'clientelism treatment' group were less likely than the control group to vote for the corrupted politician. It seems as if the mayor's attempt to preserve his/her clientelistic network is *nowadays* perceived as an additional charge to his corruption allegations. We will come back to this point later on.

Table 2 Differences between groups

	Average probability	Difference from control group	*p* value
Greed_control	2.72		
	(*n*=111)		
Greed_economic conditions	3.56	+0.76	.03
	(*n*=113)		
Greed_clientelism	2.40	−0.32	NS
	(*n*=108)		
Greed_party id	2.76	+0.04	NS
	(*n*=108)		
Need_control	2.66		
	(*n*=110)		
Need_economic conditions	3.46	+0.80	.04
	(*n*=111)		
Need_clientelism	2.04	−0.42	.06
	(*n*=111)		
Need_party id	2.28	−0.38	NS
	(*n*=110)		

individuals facing good collective economic conditions, as in the case of our scenario that informed the respondents that the mayor has cut council taxes, apply a lower penalty to mayor approval for perceived political corruption.

The other two mechanisms of attenuating the likelihood to punish political corruption are not working the way they were expected to. The possibility to gain access to resources of high value is not counter-balanced against the corruption allegations; in fact, respondents who were given the information about the mayor's attempt to establish a clientelistic network were less likely to vote for the allegedly corrupt mayor compared to those not given this piece of information. As shown in Table 2, the difference was statistically significant only in the case of the 'need corruption' scenario, but the direction of the effect was the same in both cases. Psychological attachment to the party which supported the corrupted politician also failed to moderate the relationship between corruption and political support: the partisanship mechanism did not appear to have a clear effect (see Table 2). If anything, respondents who were informed that the mayor, who has asked for money to speed up approval of someone's permits, was supported by the party the respondent has traditionally voted for were less likely to support the mayor compared to those who were not given any information about the mayor's partisanship.

Figure 1 represents the results, showing that only two of our six experimental manipulations produced the expected outcome. Only the 'tangible benefits' mechanism produced a substantial and significant increase in the expected probability of supporting the allegedly corrupt mayor in a next election (Hypothesis 1). The 'explicit exchange' mechanism produced a substantial decrease in the expected probability of supporting the allegedly corrupt mayor (Hypothesis 2), though the test produced inconclusive results in the case of the greed corruption allegation. Finally,

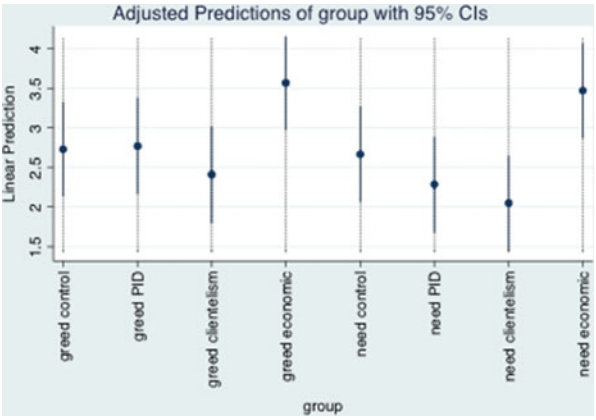

Fig. 1 Visual inspection of statistically significant differences among all group means

the 'partisanship' mechanism did not produce any statistically significant effect on the probability to support the corrupted mayor (Hypothesis 3). All in all, while our first hypothesis is confirmed, the second hypothesis needs to be revisited and the third hypothesis is not adequately supported by date. We will try to explain why this might be so in the next section.

We also tested whether the likelihood of punishing the corrupted mayor was higher in scenarios involving a bribe exchange for something the individual is entitled to compared to scenarios referring to an exchange for benefits the individual is *not* entitled to. Figure 2 reveals that the differences between the group means are not statistically significant. However, consistently, respondents were a bit more likely to turn a blind eye to greed corruption activity compared to a need corruption activity. Put differently, individual experiences with corruption seem to leave a clearer mark on respondent's political memory.

Discussion

Our tests confidently confirm that tangible benefits, such as council tax cuts, might outweigh collective costs resulting from political corruption activity. We can say, therefore, that creating favourable economic conditions in the short-run is a mechanism that can adequately explain the electoral performance of allegedly corrupt politicians. According to our estimates, by cutting the council taxes, an incumbent mayor involved in a corruption scandal can increase his chances of getting someone's vote by 8 %. In a way, the Greek voter finds it reasonable to forgive a politician for taking bribes—even if he has personal experience of being asked to pay for a benefit he was entitled to—in cases when the politician has improved collective economic well-being. This sounds like a fair deal between the two parts; most importantly, it is an agreement that seems to remain in force even in hard times, that is nowadays that corruption scandals are hitting the headlines. We can reasonably assume that such an agreement was widely accepted in the past, when the consequences of political corruption on public finances were not clearly seen.

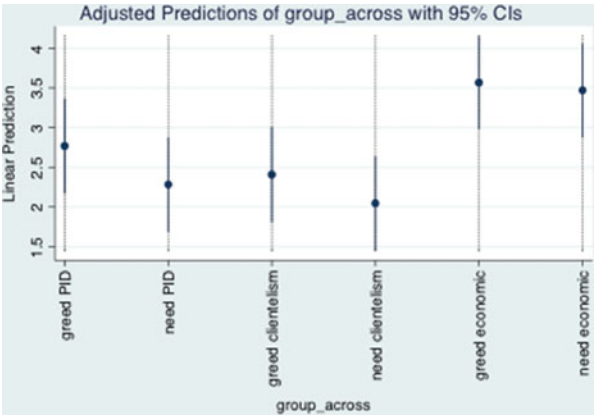

Fig. 2 Visual inspection of statistically significant differences between pairs of groups: 'need' versus 'greed corruption' treatment

The most popular explanation of tolerance to political corruption in Greece, that is the 'exchange of silence for a place in the politician's clientelistic network' is not supported by our findings. Information about clientelistic opportunities not only did not outweigh collective or individual costs caused by political corruption activity but actually drove respondents even further away from allegedly corrupt politicians. Clientelism might have flourished in the Greece of the previous decades—and it might still do so as far as it regards appointments at the highest ranks of the state machinery—but the majority of the electorate nowadays seems to be ready to consider selectively distributing benefits to your clients as an additional charge. The individualised nature of the benefit that springs out of hiring someone as a local government employee, contrary to the collective benefit of cutting council taxes, negatively affects mayor's chances of reelection.

This highly unexpected finding runs counter to previous research on the persistence of clientelistic networks in regions of historically institutionalised patronage. Charron and Lapuente [45], for example, argue that, when citizens perceive political institutions as highly partial, they try to look for individualised solutions to their problems and that clientelism offers a perfect framework for this. This contradiction might be explained by the fact that our respondents have not been clearly told that they themselves are the beneficiaries of clientelism in order to reduce the number of socially desirable answers. However, to the extent that the majority of the respondents are nowadays very likely to experience unemployment in their family, we believe it is reasonable to expect that respondents have considered themselves as potential beneficiaries of the clientelistic services that the corrupted politician has set up for the unemployed.

Having said that, our results are probably subject to some degree of social desirability effect, as people can be expected to be reluctant to acknowledge that they would vote for a corrupt politician, let alone vote for a corrupt politician who is keeping on using the same old method of selectively distributing benefits to his voters. Thus, these results are expected to be conservative. That is the reason why we also ran the clientelistic treatment scenarios with a different wording. To be more precise, we asked 216 randomly selected individuals how likely *they think it is that X*

will vote for the allegedly corrupt politician who is offering temporary jobs to unemployed citizens in municipality services by-passing the usual procedures of hiring employees in the public sector. Half of them were told that the mayor has taken bribes for the local government contract, while the other half were told that the mayor has asked X to pay him an amount of money to speed up the approval of permits for his business. Both groups' means on the ptv scale were higher than those of all other groups (5.56 for the 'need corruption/clientelism' group and 4.32 for the 'greed corruption/clientelism' group), suggesting that respondents *believed* that clientelism does work as an effective mechanism of tolerating corruption. Of course, we cannot directly compare the two pairs of scores, since the question asked of the one group regarded personal intention, while the question asked of the other group concerned personal views about someone else's intention. These findings though indicate that the social desirability effect might have actually blurred the explanatory power of clientelism as a mechanism of tolerating political corruption in Greece.

Partisanship might have been the crucial variable in explaining tolerance to corruption in the past; high levels of partisanship made sure that the negative effect of corruption on evaluations of the governing parties was attenuated among supporters of the incumbents. It would be rather surprising to find that the mechanism is still working in post-2009 Greece, where the anti-party sentiments have been steadily increasing. Indeed, respondents were found to regard the corrupted mayor's partisanship as an additional drawback and, therefore, were less likely to support him. According to our estimates, by getting the official support of any party, an incumbent mayor involved in a corruption scandal will lose almost 4 % of his support. Partisanship does not any longer moderate the electoral damage of corruption in Greece.

It is interesting though that the negative effect of partisanship on support for the corrupted politician in the 'need scenario' case gives us a hint on the potentially stronger effect of clientelism on tolerance to corruption than was actually measured in this study. Our findings suggest that respondents would be more likely to punish a mayor of their party if he asked them for money in exchange for a favour. This is an indication that they might have expected the mayor to do them a favour without asking for money, simply because they have been traditional supporters of the party which is supporting the mayor. Given the deeply-rooted clientelistic nature of Greek politics, it is reasonable to believe that respondents become furious with a mayor that puts his own personal benefit above serving his clientelistic network.

Personal experiences with corruption also failed to provide robust explanation of corruption voting. Our findings suggest that there was no statistically significant difference between respondents' reactions against incidents of greed and need corruption. The reason might be that the salience of the corruption issue in the public agenda, as well as in the media and party agendas, has recently shed much light on several cases of 'greed corruption' in the country.

All in all, our findings provide empirical evidence to the intuition that people may to some extent accept to tradeoff some level of corruption for economic well-being. Cutting council taxes, for instance, increases the probability of voting for a corrupt candidate by 8 percentage points. It should be mentioned here though that it is only collective economic benefits that seem to outweigh people's intention to punish a corrupted politician at the polls. Enjoying selective economic benefits exclusively distributed by politicians to their voters, such as those related to hiring employees in

the public sector, is not enough to secure corrupted politicians' reelection. In fact, rumours regarding the existence of clientelistic networks decrease the probability of voting for a corrupted mayor by 4 percentage points. It is too early to argue that clientelism in Greece has died, especially when this same piece of research suggests that Greeks do believe that others, not themselves, are willing to tradeoff corruption for securing a non-competed job in the public sector. Still, our findings suggest that parties do not seem to get any political benefit from competing on the number of appointments to the public sector each one has made. Anti-party sentiments in Greece are so widespread that even the mention of parties, as in the partisanship scenarios, clearly discourage people from voting for a mayor that has gained any party's support.

The implications of these findings are encouraging for a country which used to be considerably tolerant towards corrupt governments. If citizens perceive the higher costs of clientelism and its association with corrupt leadership, as our analysis suggests, they may gradually start demanding predictable policies for the distribution of public goods independent of the government in office and its client–patronage network. The economic crisis revealed the costs of clientelism and the citizens attributed guilt to the main parties, as the electoral result of May 2012 indicated, but it remains unclear whether the country will find the way out of its 'poor quality of governance' past. As the number of poor in the country reaches one-third of the population, people's needs may feed into well-organised clientelistic party machines, 'creating a perverse cycle that is highly detrimental for good governance' [8]. Our research has already suggested that people in Greece find it hard to believe that others would not vote for a corrupt politician if he promised them a temporary job in the public sector. Perceptions about corruption voting do not coincide with reported intentions when it comes to a rational tradeoff between punishing a corrupt politician and enjoying exclusive benefits as one of his voters. Besides, there is always an easier question regarding weighing electoral punishment against enjoying collective benefits: voters are less likely to feel guilty for not punishing a corrupt politician when he has provided collective benefits for all. It appears that politicians and policy makers are the ones that face the important choices regarding issues of institutional reform and candidate integrity, as well as provision of the proper collective benefits.

Corruption voting in Greece has not been studied in the past, despite the fact that the country has been generally regarded as typical example of a democracy with weak institutions which both elites and citizens had no incentive to reform, as they were both benefited from the exchange of tangible benefits for some abuse of power from the political elites' side, mainly in the form of misappropriation of public funds [46–49]. This first attempt to collect evidence on why the Greek electorate has been so tolerant towards corrupt politicians took place in 2013, that is three years after it became evident that the country's model of party democracy had failed. Thus, this study cannot provide answers on why corruption has been accommodated by the Greek public in the *previous decades*. It does provide some hints though as to whether corruption is still likely to be moderated by rational tradeoffs nowadays that corruption scandals, discussion on how to reduce the number of public employees and public spending cuts top the public agenda. Further research is surely required to assess whether the anti-corruption appeals will affect public tolerance towards corruption as well as the extent to which the consequences of rational tradeoffs or psychological attachment on corruption voting may depend on individual characteristics, such as political sophistication, ideology or socio-demographics.

Appendix

Table 3 All vignettes started as follows: 'Let's assume that you are living in a small city'. They all finish by the question: 'How likely is it that you will support the mayor at the elections next month?'

Type of corruption	Control groups	Treatment groups		
	Effectiveness + corruption	Favourable economic conditions	Clientelism	Party identification
Greed	The mayor, who has been very effective in keeping the city clean, is seeking reelection. You have recently heard though that the mayor took a bribe in exchange for providing a contract to run the canteen at the city's central park.	The mayor, who has been very effective in keeping the city clean and is **well known across the country for cutting council taxes**, is seeking reelection. You have recently heard though that the mayor took a bribe in exchange for providing a contract to run the canteen at the city's central park.	The mayor, who has been very effective in keeping the city clean and is **well known across the country for his project of hiring unemployed citizens in municipality services by-passing the usual formal procedures of hiring employees in the public sector**, is seeking reelection. You have recently heard though that the mayor took a bribe in exchange for providing a contract to run the canteen at the city's central park.	The mayor, who has been very effective in keeping the city clean and has been **openly supported by the party you are traditionally voting for**, is seeking reelection. You have recently heard though that the mayor took a bribe in exchange for providing a contract to run the canteen at the city's central park.
Need	The mayor, who has been very effective in keeping the city clean, is seeking reelection. You have recently been asked though to pay an amount of money to the mayor to speed up the approval of permits for your café.	The mayor, who has been very effective in keeping the city clean and is **well known across the country for cutting council taxes**, is seeking reelection. You have recently been asked though to pay an amount of money to the mayor to speed up the approval of permits for your café.	The mayor, who has been very effective in keeping the city clean and is **well known across the country for his project of hiring unemployed citizens in municipality services by-passing the usual formal procedures of hiring employees in the public sector**, is seeking reelection. You have recently been asked though to pay an amount of money to the mayor to speed up the approval of permits for your café.	The mayor, who has been very effective in keeping the city clean and has been **openly supported by the party you are traditionally voting for**, is seeking reelection. You have recently been asked though to pay an amount of money to the mayor to speed up the approval of permits for your café.

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