

Civil society and corruption in democracies in the “third wave” of autocratization (1994-2017): A fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis

Abstract

While the different conditions that are favorable for corruption are well researched, the combinations of conditions that lead to it remain an open and empirical question. Informed by the theoretical underpinnings of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and the extant literature on civil society-corruption nexus and the broader democracy-corruption linkage, and following from the belief that the move towards autocratization (called by some as democratic backsliding or the reduction of the quality of democracy) has implications for corruption, I employ a fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) of a total of 38 episodes or cases of autocratization that started from democracies in the “third wave” of autocratization (1994-2017) from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project to empirically explore the conditions (and combinations thereof) favorable for corruption. Learning from the above literature, the conditions (1) autonomous civil society organizations [AUTONOMCSO], (2) routinely consulted civil society organizations [INVOLVEDCSO], (3) highly engaged society [ENGAGEDSOCIETY], (4) critical media [CRITICMEDIA], and (5) high political exclusion [HIGHPOLEXCLU] are considered important explanatory factors for the outcome [HIGHPERCEIVEDCORRUP] to occur. Tests of necessity and sufficiency are carried out, and the conservative and intermediate solutions for the outcome are presented. Some initial insights, limitations of the study and the ways to move forward are discussed.