

Court Performance and Citizen Attitudes Towards Fighting Corruption

Leticia Barbabela
leticia.barbabela@ucdconnect.ie
University College Dublin

Miquel Pellicer
miquel.pellicer@mu.ie
Maynooth University

Eva Wegner
eva.wegner@ucd.ie
University College Dublin

Abstract

This paper investigates the relationship between court performance and citizen attitudes towards corruption. We develop a framework inspired by signaling theory that focuses on the need for institutional actors to send credible signals about their commitment against corruption if they seek to engage citizens. We suggest two channels that link court signals to citizen attitudes, an “institutional channel” linking signals to trust in courts and attitudes about state-driven anti-corruption measures and a “citizen channel” linking signals to citizen efficacy and norms about bribe paying. We investigate these channels with a survey experiment about a fictional court case in low income areas in South Africa and Tunisia. We find evidence that impartiality and efficiency by courts in corruption cases activate the institutional channel. Our findings suggest that courts can play an important role in the fight against corruption, not just by acting as deterrents but by affecting citizen attitudes toward corruption.

Keywords: attitudes towards corruption; courts; survey experiment, Tunisia, South Africa.

Introduction

Citizens have the potential to play a critical role in reducing corruption in at least two ways. First, by refusing to pay bribes and reporting officials demanding bribes for access to services. When citizens can report corruption the frequency of bribery and corruption victimization has been found to decrease (Serra 2012, Deininger and Mpuga 2005). Second, citizens can help reduce corruption by engaging more broadly against corruption, such as putting pressure on local and national governments or voting corrupt candidates out of office. Indeed, several scholars argue that empowering citizens to demand better governance is crucial for decreasing corruption (Bauhr and Grimes 2014, 562; Johnston 2014; Mungiu-Pippidi 2016).

Citizens strongly dislike corruption and when faced with hypothetical candidates that differ only in corruption clearly prefer clean candidates (Boas, Hidalgo, and Melo 2018; Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013). However, the actual role that citizens play in the fight against corruption is at best ambiguous. There is evidence from some field experiments that citizens withdraw electoral support from corrupt incumbents when they are provided with credible information against corruption (Costas-Pérez, Solé-Ollé, and Sorribas-Navarro 2012; Ferraz and Finan 2008). At the same time, other research has shown that voters often do not sanction corrupt politicians – at least not if that politician has other relevant characteristics (see review in De Vries and Solaz 2017). Citizens have also been shown to justify their own corrupt strategies, such as influence peddling, even if they condemn high level corruption (de Sousa 2008). More generally, some scholars argue that bottom-up, citizen oriented, mechanisms are less effective than other anti-corruption strategies (e.g. Gans-Morse et al. 2018).

A potential way to reconcile citizens' general dislike of corruption with their largely unfulfilled potential to fight it is proposed by the notion of a corruption equilibrium (Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell 2013). When citizens believe corruption to be widespread, institutions to be ineffective or disinterested in controlling corruption, and their fellow citizens to be bribe payers, their incentives to fight corruption diminish and they themselves end up sustaining corruption. Empirical evidence suggests that the mechanism underlying corruption equilibria is plausible. Perceiving high levels of corruption is associated with lower trust in political institutions (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Bowler and Karp 2004; Seligson 2006; Warren 2004), as well as with political apathy and the belief that citizens are unable to do anything about corruption (Chong et al. 2015; Kostadinova 2009). Moreover, information about corruption being widespread has been found to make citizens more willing to pay bribes rather than generating collective action against corruption (Čábelková and Hanousek 2004; Corbacho et al. 2016).

The flip side of the corruption equilibrium is that when institutions fight corruption seriously, this can alter citizens' role in the corruption equilibrium and potentially help break it. So far, there is some research examining how citizens respond to *government* anti-corruption measures. There is some evidence that perceptions of government anti-corruption effectiveness are associated with citizens' willingness to oppose corruption in non-OECD countries (Peiffer

and Alvarez 2016). Relatedly, evidence from a cross-country study shows that institutional trust is positively associated with civic engagement against corruption (Bauhr 2017).

This paper examines the potential of courts to alter citizen attitudes towards fighting corruption. Beyond government, courts can play a particularly important role in engaging citizens in the fight against corruption. Many of the activities regarded as corrupt are formally illegal acts and the legal punishment of corrupt acts is often an inherent part of anti-corruption drives. Because judicial actors can sanction corrupt acts perpetrated by politicians, they have a high potential to engage citizens in anti-corruption action.

We know little about how court performance might affect citizen attitudes towards fighting corruption in general and what the exact mechanism is. A priori, it makes sense to think that court performance matters for citizen trust and engagement against corruption. Case studies on the Clean Hands investigations in Italy or operation Carwash in Brazil have indeed argued that judicial activism against corruption leads to favorable evaluation of the judiciary, more citizen engagement against corruption and a higher sense of citizens' efficacy against corruption (Chang, Golden, and Hill 2010; Pavão 2019; Sberna and Vannucci 2013).¹

We provide a simple conceptual framework to examine how court performance in corruption cases may affect citizen attitudes. The core of our argument is that court performance in corruption cases can be a signal for citizens that the state cares about corruption. However, for this signal to be convincing and affect citizens' attitudes, it needs to be credible. This is particularly relevant in an environment where corruption is widespread, and many institutional actors may claim to be fighting corruption. Relying on insights from signaling theory (Gambetta 2009; Spence 1973), we argue that these signals can be credible only if they are costly. We identify two dimensions in which courts can send a costly (credible) signal of anti-corruption fight: by prosecuting and adjudicating corruption cases in a timely manner, and by remaining impartial in the face of political pressure.

Our core hypothesis is that costly signals of anti-corruption commitment - courts' displaying efficiency and impartiality in processing corruption cases - can potentially impact citizens' attitudes towards corruption. We consider two different channels through which a credible anti-corruption signal from the courts could affect citizens, mirroring the two possible roles of citizens in opposing bribes and putting pressure on formal political institutions mentioned above. First, a citizen responsibility channel through which court signals increase perceptions of anti-corruption efficacy, leading to changing norms about the acceptability of paying bribes. Second, an institutional support channel through which court signals increase trust in institutions, leading to support for increasing government resources to fight corruption. As a

¹ The Clean Hands (Mani Pulite) operation was a nationwide judicial investigation into political corruption in Italy in the 1990s. Six former prime ministers, more than five hundred members of Parliament and several thousand local and public administrators were part of the investigation. Most leading political figures were forced to resign; the major parties disappeared or underwent radical transformation (Vannucci 2009). Car-Wash (Lava Jato) is an ongoing investigation into corruption in Brazil. It led to the conviction of high-profile politicians from Brazil's largest parties (including presidents and state governors) as well as businessmen from large Brazilian companies.

secondary hypothesis, we examine if the type of corruption that the courts are dealing with (petty or grand corruption) affects which type of attitudes towards corruption are changed.

We test this framework using a survey experiment in a context plagued by corruption and low trust in institutions: low income areas in Tunisia and South Africa. Respondents are exposed to a vignette about a fictional corruption case in which three features vary: whether courts are being efficient/inefficient, impartial/partial and whether the defendants are high/low ranking officials.

Our fictional vignette succeeds in affecting attitudes towards corruption. We find that court impartiality (more so than efficiency), acts as a credible signal of court performance. Impartiality activates the institutional support channel. The effect is moderated by the level corruption in the court case: impartiality has a general positive effect on trust, and it influences support for anti-corruption spending when high-ranking officials are on trial rather than when trials relate to low-ranking officials. In contrast, we find no evidence for the citizen responsibility channel.

Our paper contributes to emerging work on the connections between government effectiveness and citizen mobilization against corruption (Bauhr 2017; Peiffer and Alvarez 2016). We highlight the role of the judiciary as an important state institution to affect citizens' attitudes toward corruption. To the best of our knowledge, our paper is the first to investigate how the nature of court rulings in anti-corruption cases affects citizen attitudes. Our findings suggest that how courts approach these cases matters for citizen attitudes towards corruption, especially if citizens believe these actions are costly to courts, such as impartiality in grand corruption cases. Our findings also show that the effects of court action in anti-corruption can go beyond punishment and potential deterrence of future corrupt acts. Crucially, court punishment of corruption has the potential to generate citizen support for state action against corruption.

Court performance, credible signals, and citizen attitudes towards corruption

The sanctioning of corrupt officials by courts matters for corruption in two key ways. First, sanctioning corruption might deter future corrupt acts and second, it might affect citizen engagement against corruption. This paper focuses on the latter and investigates the link between court performance in corruption cases and citizen attitudes.

The existence of a link between judicial anti-corruption actions and citizen engagement against corruption is suggested by the experience of two countries that have witnessed large-scale anti-corruption movements, Italy and Brazil. In these episodes judicial action is thought to have been crucial in shaping citizens' attitudes (Vannucci 2009). For Italy, Sberna and Vannucci (2013) argue that the enforcement of anti-corruption legislation by courts in the context of the Clean Hands operation was essential for citizens withdrawing support from corrupt politicians. The unprecedented level of effectiveness displayed by courts when prosecuting corrupt politicians triggered a snowball effect, which was widely broadcasted by the media, and eventually affected public opinion in the same direction. For Brazil, scholars also suggest that judicial action in the large-scale anti-corruption Carwash investigation affected citizen

attitudes, in particularly trust in courts and beliefs about the ability of ordinary citizens to make a difference in the fight against corruption (Pavão 2019).

While these accounts do not spell out a precise mechanism by which court performance and citizen attitudes on corruption are linked, they do suggest the existence of a relationship. At the same time, persistent corruption, widespread claims by politicians to be “against corruption”, and frequent politically motivated anti-corruption drives are likely to make citizens suspicious about the truthfulness of any state institution taking action against corruption. In the following, this paper develops a framework and tests a possible mechanism between judicial action against corruption and citizen attitudes about corruption.

Opposition against Corruption as a Signaling Problem

Citizen dislike of corruption implies that many actors have incentives to emphasize their opposition to corruption. In many elections around the world, taking strong stances against corruption has become a valence issue, that is, an issue that is universally supported (Curini 2017; Curini and Martelli 2015). As with all valence issues, for citizens the key point becomes to decide who is best at tackling the subject. In high corruption environments where many suffer from the consequences of grand and petty corruption, the importance of corruption as a valence topic increases and many state actors will profess their commitment against corruption – irrespective of whether they are willing to take action. As a result, citizens perceive statements to fight corruption as “cheap talk” and they have a hard time figuring out who is trustworthy. Additionally, citizens may be suspicious about governments’ motives even when they act against corruption. For example, evidence from Argentina and Chile shows that most corruption scandals come to light because of competition between government actors (Balán 2011) rather than because of a new and robust commitment against corruption.

Convincing citizens of their commitment to fight corruption is clearly an advantage not just for incumbents or electoral candidates, but also for courts. For courts, projecting an image as incorruptible, impartial upholders of the law is likely to matter for the expansion and consolidation of judicial power. Judicial power denotes the extent to which court decisions are complied with and diminishes if courts are not seen as legitimate and fair (Tyler 2006). Fighting corruption is a display of fairness and thus a way for courts to harness support and become more powerful. As for politicians, the problem is that truly committed and un-committed magistrates have similar incentives to be perceived to stand firm against corruption.

As citizens are the key victims of corruption and would benefit from better enforcement of anti-corruption norms (Mungiu-Pippidi 2016), they have an interest in understanding whether (or which) courts are committed to action against corruption. However, because citizens have limited information, they struggle to tell apart which courts are committed from those who are not. Moreover, because citizens often perceive judges themselves as corrupt and have low levels of trust in courts (Seligson 2006), they are likely to be suspicious about anti-corruption declarations by courts.

How can such trust problems be overcome? Signaling theory (Spence 1973) outlines some of the conditions by which parties can solve a trust problem to achieve a common interest.

Signaling theory covers situations where a property or characteristic cannot be directly observed (for example, honesty, ideological commitment, or loyalty) and both those having the characteristic (e.g. honesty) and those not having it benefit from convincing an audience that they, in fact, have that characteristic. Applied to corruption, we can think of the politicians or magistrates as having an interest in citizens believing that they are truly committed to fight corruption, whereas for citizens, it is costly to believe those who are not truly committed.

The main result in signaling theory is that there is a potential solution to this problem. If the truthful actor can emit a signal that would be too costly for untruthful actors- then observing this signal could be credible evidence for the audience (Gambetta 2009). For example, studies of recruitment strategies of criminal or terrorist organizations where the challenge is to tell apart true believers from spies (Gambetta 2009; Hegghammer 2012) highlight the importance of cost-discriminating signs of trustworthiness. The solution is to focus on individuals who display signs which would be too costly to fake.

Comparably, in the context of a high-corruption equilibrium, citizens show low levels of institutional trust, and institutional actors have an incentive to mimic anti-corruption commitment. Citizens need a costly display of anti-corruption commitment to be convinced of the trustworthiness of an anti-corruption signal. What such costly signals are depends on the context. For example, legislators seeking to signal that they are not corrupt might need to avoid contact with lobbyists (Schnakenberg and Turner 2019). For courts, we argue that features of performance that signal such trustworthiness are efficiency and impartiality in corruption cases. Efficiency is a costly signal because corruption cases are known to be technically demanding and require a great capacity to investigate and process information. Thus, displaying efficiency demands the allocation of limited time and resources. Impartiality is costly because standing up against corrupt politicians and state officials risks push-back by these powerful individuals against court decisions. Impartial judges might face threats to their own security (Johnston 2012; see also Sberna and Vannucci 2013). Thus, impartiality in corruption cases is potentially risky for courts.

Mechanism

The mechanism proposed in this paper outlines how court performance in processing corruption cases might affect citizens' attitudes towards corruption (see figure 1).

[Figure 1 around here]

Commitment to fight corruption by courts is an unobserved property which can be signaled in two costly ways: by displaying efficiency and impartiality. Courts are efficient if they are capable of investigating and adjudicating corruption offenses successfully and in a timely manner. Courts are impartial if they do not discriminate between different defendants and their

rulings are free of undue government influence.² If these features of court performance constitute a costly signal that allows differentiation between committed and non-committed actors, we expect citizens' evaluations of judicial performance - that is, their perceptions of the quality of courts and expectations about the outcome of courts' ruling - to vary according to the signal. Thus, our first hypothesis states that *Citizens perceive displays of efficiency and impartiality as credible signals of court commitment against corruption (H.1).*

Once courts' commitment is perceived as credible, we propose two potential channels through which signals would influence citizens' attitudes: a first that stresses the role of citizens and a second that stresses the role of institutions.

In the first channel (*citizen responsibility channel*), credible signals by a state institution could empower citizens and affect their norms about bribe paying. This mechanism is inspired by findings that judicial activism against corruption is associated with increased citizen efficacy (Pavão 2019). Thus,

H.2a. Signals of commitment against corruption make citizens more willing to oppose bribery. This is mediated by citizens' increased sense of efficacy against corruption.

In the second channel (*institutional support channel*), credible court signals could make formal institutions aimed at tackling corruption more legitimate in the eyes of citizens. Indeed, previous studies have shown that judicial effectiveness against corruption as well as corruption convictions can increase trust in courts and government (Chang, Golden, and Hill 2010; Sberna and Vannucci 2013; Zhang and Kim 2018). We expand on these findings and suggest that this could carry over to support for state action against corruption. Thus,

H.2b. Signals of commitment against corruption make citizens more willing to support anti-corruption spending. This is mediated by citizens' increased trust in courts.

Last, we propose, that citizen reactions might be moderated by the type of corruption – grand vs. petty – a court is dealing with. Grand corruption refers to practices that take place at the highest levels of politics and society and thus involves powerful elites. It highlights corruption as a problem within formal institutions. As grand corruption benefits the already wealthy and influential, grand corruption court cases are especially likely to be the target of political pressure. In contrast, petty corruption involves citizens directly when they interact with low-ranking officials asking for bribes to access public services or to turn a blind eye on small infractions by citizens. It highlights corruption as an everyday problem where citizens could, in principle, resist corruption directly by not paying bribes or reporting these infractions. Because of these differences, we hypothesize that credible court signals in petty corruption cases are more likely to affect the citizen responsibility channel where beliefs about efficacy and social norms about petty corruption matter whereas credible court signals in grand

² Impartiality is commonly used as a component of broader concepts, such as government effectiveness (Uslaner 2008) or the rule of law (The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2020). This implies that impartiality is not exclusively an attribute of courts but also about how power holders relate to courts. However, in this paper, we operationalize impartiality as a pure court attribute – and in clear opposition to politicians who try to influence the court decision - to investigate how this might affect citizen attitudes.

corruption cases are most likely to moderate the institutional support channel that concerns state action against corruption. Thus,

H.3a. In the context of petty corruption cases, signals of commitment against corruption make citizens more willing to oppose bribery (interaction effect).

H.3b. In the context of grand corruption cases, signals of commitment against corruption make citizens more willing to support anti-corruption spending (interaction effect).

Corruption and Corruption Perceptions in Tunisia and South Africa

In this paper we test whether and in what way signals of anti-corruption commitment by courts affect citizen attitudes towards fighting corruption. To do so we use a survey experiment that we implemented in low- and middle-income areas in Tunisia and in South Africa.

Tunisia and South Africa both struggle with corruption, with corruption scores in the lower half of Transparency's corruption perception index. In Tunisia, corruption under the Ben Ali regime was one of the factors fuelling grievances among the people. After the transition to democracy, the fight against corruption was enshrined as a national objective in the constitution. However, whereas corruption under Ben Ali was more centralized and benefitting a small number of elites, after the transition, is believed to have "become endemic, with everyday citizens engaging in and benefitting from corrupt practices" (Yerkes and Muasher 2017, 1). In other words, corrupt practices became more decentralized, rather than concentrated in the hands of a few powerful figures (Lee-Jones, 2018). Possibly because of this shift, three quarters of Tunisians believe that there is more corruption in post-Ben Ali Tunisia than before. A majority also believe that the government's top priority in fighting corruption should be to address impunity (Yerkes and Muasher 2017, 6–7). Anti-corruption institutions, while active, remain weak and underfunded. Likewise, the judiciary also suffers from poor financial and personnel resources which limits its abilities to fight corruption effectively.

Post-Apartheid South Africa inherited a fairly high level of corruption in government departments from the Apartheid regime (Lodge 1998). After the transition to democracy in the 1990s, South Africa has had its share of high-level corruption scandals. In particular, during Jacob Zuma's presidency, corruption is thought to have increased (Lodge 2014). Most attention on corruption focusses on public tenders in the context of the rolling out of housing, electricity, and sanitation after the end of Apartheid (e.g. Olver 2017). Petty corruption is also likely to be prevalent, but estimates vary widely (affecting between 5 and 15% of South Africans in a given year (Andvig 2008). Anti-corruption institutions and the judiciary function better than in Tunisia, as was shown when the Public Protector found that former President Zuma unduly used public funds to improve his homestead and the Constitutional Court ruled that the president violated the country's constitution after he failed to return the funds.

Even if Tunisia and South Africa are, by far, not the most corrupt African countries, citizens in both countries share the view that corruption is widespread (see table 1). According to data from the Afrobarometer, close to half of the respondents in both countries feel that most or all members of parliament and government are corrupt. A similar share of respondents also

believes that the level of corruption increased a lot in the past year and that the government is doing a very bad job fighting corruption.

[Table 1 around here]

To what extent do South Africans and Tunisians believe their courts are impartial and efficient when adjudicating corruption cases? Although there are no specific indicators to assess this, data from the Afrobarometer and the World Justice Project suggest that expectations of impartiality and efficiency are probably low in our samples. Between a quarter (Tunisia) and one third (South Africa) of respondents state that all or most judges and magistrates are corrupt, a large number for an institution that is supposed to combat corruption. Accordingly, trust in courts is low: about a third of Tunisians and almost 50% of South Africans have no or little trust in court and 60% of South Africans and 80% of Tunisians believe that public officials often or always go unpunished for their crimes. In addition to these attitudinal data, figures from the World Justice Project also suggest that courts in both countries are objectively not very impartial or efficient. For criminal justice, Tunisia and South Africa score 0.35 and 0.55 for impartiality (on a scale from 0-1), and 0.46 and 0.52 for efficiency (see table 1). Although these are figures for criminal justice, they are likely to inform citizen beliefs about other court proceedings.

Overall, these data describe two countries where citizens are likely to perceive anti-corruption statements as “cheap talk”. Beliefs that corruption inside political institutions is very widespread, that corruption is increasing, that the government is doing a bad job in fighting together with low trust in politicians probably lead to a high level of pessimism and scepticism about anti-corruption claims or signals. This is probably amplified by the negative image of courts that results from their own implication in corruption as well as the high levels of impunity in the two countries. The combination of high corruption perceptions and low trust in courts and politicians make South Africa and Tunisia good test cases for the signaling mechanism we propose in this paper.

Experiment and Data

The experiment was embedded in a survey that addresses demand for clientelism. The sample comprises about 2,000 respondents, evenly split between South Africa and Tunisia.³ In South Africa, data collection took place in KwaZulu-Natal, a relatively poor South African province with a high incidence of clientelism. In Tunisia, it was spread over different locations in the country. All samples are stratified so that we have a rural sample, a lower middle-class sample, and different types of urban poor. In South Africa, there is a subset of urban poor respondents

³ The data was collected in face-to-face surveys in autumn 2019. Within each stratum, enumeration areas were randomly selected. In each EA, around 10-15 respondents were interviewed. A start point was selected in each EA – after this, enumerators selected households per random walk. Interviewees in the household were selected with a Kish Grid. Responses were recorded on tablets.

in a formal settlement and informal settlement. In Tunisia, the two subsets of urban poor respondents are in Tunis and in an inner province (Sidi Bouzid). Due to vastly lower levels of inequality, Tunisian citizens are generally much better off than South Africans. However, our data collection targeted poorer citizens in both countries and generated two relatively comparable samples in terms of their socio-economic well-being. As shown in table A.1 in the appendix, respondents in the two countries have similar levels of education and asset ownership, and access to basic services.

Experiment

We use a conjoint experiment to test whether and how signaling anti-corruption commitment influences citizens. It is designed to measure the effect of three attributes of the corruption case on citizens' attitudes towards fighting corruption. The conjoint experiment is delivered as a single vignette.

The vignette describes a fictional court corruption case. It is read to respondents by the enumerator. Efficiency is operationalized as the swiftness of the process. In the efficient scenario courts made this case a priority and it did not take long, the inefficient scenario has the opposite characteristics. Impartiality is operationalized as the extent of the trial's fairness and of political pressure. In the impartial scenario the trial was fair and courts were "not at all" influenced by political pressure, the partial scenario has the opposite characteristic. In addition, the defendants in the case might have been high-ranking or low-ranking officials which we use as proxies for grand vs. petty corruption cases. Each respondent was randomly exposed to one out of the eight possible versions of the vignette.

The basic structure of the vignette is shown below. The three attributes of the treatment are in bold, the text in italic highlights the specific country where the experiment is set. Table 2 displays how the dimensions in the text were completed in the different permutations.

Vignette

Courts in *South Africa [Tunisia]* recently investigated 20 **[rank]** officials for corruption in different *provinces [Tun: Governorate]*. **[efficiency]**. After the trials, everyone agreed that **[partiality]**."

[Table 2 around here]

A few things are noteworthy about the design of the experiment. First, in line with best practice in political science, we do not mislead the respondents and informed them that the vignette was not real. Second, we do not spell out in which direction the political pressure would go (i.e. in favor of the defendants or against them). However, our results suggest that respondents interpreted the pressure to go in favor of the officials on trial. Third, the experiment attempts to keep the different dimensions of the attributes as similar as possible (e.g. gave priority, vs.

did not give priority, or fair vs. unfair). Fourth, no further characteristics (such as party affiliation) of the “officials” in the court cases are provided. We are thus unable to ascertain who respondents are thinking about when hearing about corrupt officials. This is a potential limitation as the identity of the defendant in real world corruption cases is known and might affect citizen attitudes toward the court case.

Outcome variables

There are three sets of outcome variables: the first relates to citizens’ evaluations of court performance, the second to the citizen responsibility, and the third to the institutional support channel.

The first hypothesis tests whether signals of court commitment against corruption are perceived to be credible by respondents. We operationalize perceived credibility with two survey questions. The first assesses citizens’ opinions about the work of the courts, the second their expectations about the number of defendants that will be convicted.⁴ These questions were asked directly after the vignette. About a third of respondents claimed courts were working well whereas respondents expected around 10 out of 20 officials from the vignette to get convicted (see table A.2 in the appendix with descriptive statistics of the outcome variables).

The citizen responsibility channel relies on two questions, one on efficacy, and another on bribe paying norms. Citizen efficacy against corruption is measured with a standard question about the ability of ordinary people to make a difference in the fight against corruption. Social norms about the acceptability of paying bribes are measured with the statement “If someone has problems accessing a public service (like getting an ID card or social assistance), he might have no other choice than to pay a bribe”. Agreement is measured with a 5-item scale. Beliefs about efficacy are high: two thirds of respondents agree or agree strongly with the statement. Social norms against bribe paying are also strong with about two thirds disagreeing or disagreeing strongly with having “no other choice than to pay a bribe”.

We operationalize the institutional support channel with two outcome questions: First, trust in courts as a prerequisite of changing attitudes toward formal institutional anti-corruption channels, and second, support for government policies against corruption. Trust in courts is measured by agreement with the question “Courts in Tunisia/South Africa can be trusted”. Willingness to support anti-corruption investment is measured with the statement “*I would support an increase in government spending to fight corruption, even if this means that the government has less money for other important things, such as employment or healthcare*”. To prevent wholesale agreement with the statement, the question intends to present spending for anti-corruption measures as a trade-off. For both statements, agreement is measured with a 5-item agree scale. Trust in courts in both countries is low, with only 40% of the respondents

⁴ The question assessing the quality of work done by courts is phrased as follows: “In the story I just read to you, in your opinion, were the courts working well to punish corruption or not working well?”. The question assessing expectations about convictions is as follows: “In the story I just read to you, in your opinion, how many of the 20 officials will be convicted by the courts and go to prison?” Possible answers range from 0 to 20.

having trust in courts (agreeing or agreeing strongly with the statement). Willingness to support spending is higher with about 50% indicating support.⁵

Results

The main goal of the experiment is to assess the causal effect of signals of anti-corruption commitment on citizens' attitudes. As we do not have a control group, all results show the effect of positive signals relative to negative signals. We analyze the experiment with simple OLS or logistic regressions of our outcome variables on the three treatments: efficiency, impartiality, and grand corruption. In all analyses, we use country, demographic and attitudinal controls to make our estimates more precise; the analyses without these controls yield very similar results and can be found in the appendix (tables A.3-A.5).

Credibility of court signals

First, we assess the link between perceived credibility of the efficiency and impartiality signals. We estimate the effect of the treatments on our two credibility outcome variables. We employ a logistic regression for the binary outcome variable – whether courts were working well – and a linear regression for the conviction variable.

As shown in table 3, both signals appear to be credible to respondents. Being exposed to signals of court efficiency and impartiality, as opposed to inefficiency and partiality, leads to perceptions that courts are working well and that more defendants will be convicted. This implies that respondents perceive impartiality and efficiency as credible court signals.

However, respondents perceive impartiality as a much stronger signal than efficiency. For both outcome variables, the effect of efficiency is about half the size of the impartiality. In high corruption environments providing a fair, unbiased, trial therefore appears to be seen as more credible than putting up the resources to deliver a quick investigation– a sensible result.⁶

[Table 3 around here]

Channels

⁵ Holland (2018) notes that poor citizens in many unequal countries do not necessarily expect or demand redistribution. This would imply that poor citizens do not see a clear trade-off between investing in anti-corruption measures and government spending in other areas. However, this unlikely to be the case in our samples as citizens have high expectations on the state in both countries. For example, in South Africa, about a third of the population depend on government grants such as the old age pension or the child support grant.

⁶ Appendix B shows the results by country. Results generally hold in each of the two cases; the only relevant difference is that Tunisians care equally about efficiency and impartiality whereas South Africans mostly care about impartiality.

Next, we evaluate how court efficiency and impartiality affect citizen attitudes towards corruption. We provide results separately for the two channels explained above: citizen responsibility and institutional support. Table 4 displays the results for the *citizen responsibility* channel. We hypothesized that credible courts signals could lead citizens to change their norms about bribe paying and that this might be mediated by an increased sense of efficacy against corruption. There is little support for this channel: All treatment effects are virtually zero. Neither court efficiency nor impartiality affect efficacy or bribe paying norms. These attitudes are also not affected by whether high ranking or lower ranking officials are tried. These results suggest that signals of court action against corruption, even when considered credible, are not sufficient to affect direct citizen-level engagement with corruption.

[Table 4 around here]

Second, we evaluate the *institutional support channel*. We hypothesized that credible signals of court commitment against corruption could carry over to support for the fight against corruption by other state actors and that this channel could be mediated by increased trust in courts. Table 5 shows the results. Columns 1 and 2 show the effect of efficiency and impartiality on trust in courts and on support for anti-corruption spending. Court efficiency appears not to have an effect on trust and spending. This is consistent with the findings on credibility above that showed that efficiency was a rather weak signal of credibility, weaker than impartiality. Regarding impartiality, in contrast, we do find an effect on trust in courts. Respondents that were exposed to a vignette where courts were impartial, are more likely to express more trust in courts in South Africa and Tunisia in general. However, the effect does not carry over to support for spending, a matter we will come back to below.

[Table 5 around here]

Columns 3 and 4 consider whether the type of corruption (grand vs. petty corruption) shown in the vignette moderates the effect of impartiality on support for institutional action against corruption. For both outcome variables (trust in courts and support for spending), the coefficient for impartiality (un-interacted) is insignificantly different from zero, whereas the interaction between impartiality and grand corruption is positive, sizable, and statistically significant. This suggests that impartiality in petty corruption cases does not affect trust and support for spending, but that it does matter in grand corruption cases.⁷ This is consistent with our hypothesis on the moderating role of grand corruption in the institutional channel. Overall, it appears that seeing courts behave impartially in grand corruption cases indeed does affect

⁷ Strictly speaking the results in table 5 do not imply statistically significant effects of impartiality on trust and on support when restricting to grand corruption cases. In an (unreported) additional regression, we recode the variables appropriately and find that the coefficients for impartiality in cases of grand corruption are indeed statistically significant for both outcome variables.

citizens, increasing trust in institutions that fight corruption and support for spending on anti-corruption measures.⁸

The table also shows a further interesting result, on the effect of grand corruption on citizen attitudes in the institutional channel. The coefficient of grand corruption (uninteracted) is negative and statistically significant, both for trust in courts and for support for spending. This result implies that seeing high-ranking corrupt officials being treated partially (presumably in their favor), is more demotivating than seeing the same for low-ranking officials.

We have found that court impartiality generally encourages citizens to support institutional anti-corruption efforts, in line with our hypotheses on the institutional channel. However, when it comes to the last step, i.e. supporting increases in anti-corruption spending, the effect of impartiality only appears when connected to grand corruption cases. It appears that on its own, signals of impartiality are not strong enough to sway citizens to giving the government money for anti-corruption measures. Following a literature that studies the effects of trust on government spending (discussed in Charron, Haring and Lapuente (2021)), we hypothesize that the very low trust in politicians in Tunisia and South Africa could be a reason for this. Citizens who view politicians as untrustworthy are probably less likely to believe that the government would spend the money well in the fight against corruption. They might still be swayed by court signals of impartiality to have higher trust in courts, but this would not be carried over to supporting increases in spending. In turn, citizens who have a minimum of trust in politicians should be more likely to allocate money for anti-corruption measures when they get signals of court impartiality.

We operationalize this idea by reperforming our analysis on the institutional channel for respondents with at least some trust in politicians. We limit our sample to those respondents who agree, agree strongly or are at least neutral about the statement: “Generally speaking, politicians try to keep their promises.” This reduces our sample by half, roughly equally divided between South Africans and Tunisians. Table 6 shows the results. The first two columns display the results for court signals. The results are very similar to the full sample, indicating that individuals with trust in politicians respond to efficacy and impartiality in similar ways as the whole sample.

Columns 3 shows support for spending. Importantly, we now find an effect of impartiality for support for spending with a sizable, and statistically significant coefficient. Column 4 displays the interaction effects with grand corruption. Results are qualitatively similar to those in the full sample.

[Table 6 around here]

⁸ An alternative explanation for this result could be that impartiality in grand corruption is generally seen as a costlier signal by citizens. However, if this was driving our results, we should also observe that impartiality in grand corruption cases matters in the citizen channel. As shown in table 4, impartiality in grand corruption cases (indicated by the uninteracted impartiality coefficient in models 3 and 4) has no effect on citizen attitudes. This suggests that the rank of the defendant only acts as a moderator in the institutional channel but has no additional “cost” signal.

In sum, we find that court efficiency and impartiality make courts more credible in the eyes of citizens, although the effect is considerably stronger for impartiality. We find no support for the citizen responsibility channel: neither court impartiality nor efficiency induces respondents to feel more efficacious or to change their social norms about bribery. However, we do find broad support for our institutional channel. This is driven by signals of impartiality. Citizens are encouraged to support more strongly institutional anti-corruption efforts when courts are shown to be impartial. This is particularly the case when the defendants are high ranking officials, and (regarding support for spending), when respondents have at least minimal trust in politicians.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Court signals matter for citizen attitudes. Previous research has argued that governments' handling of corruption can affect citizen attitudes about corruption (Bauhr 2017; Peiffer and Alvarez 2016). In this paper, we investigate how actions of a particularly relevant institution in the fight against corruption– the judiciary – might affect citizen attitudes. We find that impartiality in corruption cases increases trust in courts and support for state anti-corruption policies, in particular when the courts are dealing with grand corruption cases.

Our findings also suggest that the effect of court rulings on corruption is not only about how court rulings might reduce corruption by acting as a deterrent but via changing citizen engagement. In other words, the effect of court rulings about corruption can be to make citizens more “principled” (Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell 2013). At the same time, the absence of an effect on citizen efficacy and norms of bribe-paying suggests that the effect on being more principled is limited to support for government anti-corruption policy.

Our findings confirm and nuance the importance of judicial activism against corruption in anti-corruption drives. It has been suggested there is a need to develop the capacity to hold government accountable by making the judicial system “more autonomous and change-oriented” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2016, 107). Our findings suggest that such efforts could have additional positive effects on citizen trust in courts and support for state action against corruption. Their ability to empower citizens to personally oppose acts of corruption they may encounter in their daily lives, however, is questionable.

Our second relevant finding is that impartiality, rather than efficiency, seems to be the driving signal behind our mechanism. This finding resonates with a large strand of research that points to fairness as an important driver of citizens' support for court decisions (Tyler 2006). Partiality in the exercise of authority by justice institutions has been found to be associated with low social trust (Rothstein and Stolle 2008). We contribute to this literature by showing the relevance of impartiality in the context of corruption cases in which citizens are not directly affected by court decisions.

Third, our results suggest that court signals do not affect citizen attitudes towards corruption uniformly. Observing courts act impartially in corruption cases does not affect citizen perceptions of their own efficacy to act against corruption or norms about bribe-paying. In

contrast, citizens appear to identify court signals as positive action from a state institution and therefore adapt their attitudes towards state action against corruption. The fact that citizen efficacy and their norms about bribe paying are not affected according to our findings, puts into question the extent to which courts - or displays of governmental effectiveness - can truly empower citizens against corruption. At the very least, it suggests that these types of attitudes might be more entrenched and thus harder to change than those about formal institutions.

Last our paper points to the potentially fruitful use of signaling theory in research on corruption. Signaling theory deals with situations where trust is low and many actors have an interest in pretending to have certain characteristics. This applies to corruption in a straightforward way as credibility is hard to identify when many actors claim to work against corruption. Signaling theory identifies ways in which credible signals can be transmitted and could thereby be relevant for modelling ways out of the corruption equilibrium.

How generalizable are our results? South Africans and Tunisians generally have high perceptions of corruption, low trust in courts and formal politics, and a widespread perception that the government is not doing a good job in addressing that problem. These attitudes are common in countries where corruption is widespread and persistent. The ability of our experiment to affect attitudes temporarily in such as setting suggests that the relationship between court rulings on corruption and citizen attitudes might hold more broadly in countries suffering from high levels of corruption and skepticism towards anti-corruption commitment.

Overall, the findings in this paper point at a role for courts in changing attitudes towards state action against corruption. This implies that there is an important emerging research agenda around the relationship of court rulings and citizen attitudes towards corruption, in addition to existing ones that deal with the role of other state institutions or politicians.

References

- Anderson, Christopher J., and Yuliya V. Tverdova. 2003. "Corruption, Political Allegiances and Attitudes Toward Government in Contemporary Democracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(1): 91–109.
- Andvig, Jens. 2008. "Corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa and Its Sources of Evidence." *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs Working Paper* No. 744.
- Balán, Manuel. 2011. "Competition by Denunciation: The Political Dynamics of Corruption Scandals in Argentina and Chile." *Comparative Politics* 43(4): 459–78.
- Bauhr, Monika. 2017. "Need or Greed? Conditions for Collective Action against Corruption." *Governance* 30(4): 561–81.
- Bauhr, Monika, and Marcia Grimes. 2014. "Indignation or Resignation: The Implications of Transparency for Societal Accountability." *Governance* 27(2): 291–320.
- Beaumont, Elizabeth. 2011. "Promoting Political Agency, Addressing Political Inequality: A Multilevel Model of Internal Political Efficacy." *Journal of Politics* 73(1): 216–31.
- Boas, Taylor C, F Daniel Hidalgo, and Marcus André Melo. 2018. "Norms versus Action: Why Voters Fail to Sanction Malfeasance in Brazil." *American Political Science Review* 00(00): 1–16.
- Bowler, Shaun, and Jeffrey A Karp. 2004. "Politicians, Scandals, and Trust in Government."

- Political Behavior* 26(3): 271–87.
- Čábelková, Inna, and Jan Hanousek. 2004. “The Power of Negative Thinking: Corruption, Perception and Willingness to Bribe in Ukraine.” *Applied Economics* 36(4): 383–97.
- Chang, Eric C C, Miriam A Golden, and Seth J Hill. 2010. “Legislative Malfeasance and Political Accountability.” *World Politics* 62(2): 177–220.
- Charron, Nicholas, Haring, Niklas and Lapuente, Victor. 2021. ‘Trust, regulation, and redistribution why some governments overregulate and under-redistribute’, *Regulation and Governance*, 15(1): 3–16.
- Chong, Alberto, Ana L. De La O, Dean Karlan, and Leonard Wantchekon. 2015. “Does Corruption Information Inspire the Fight or Quash the Hope? A Field Experiment in Mexico on Voter Turnout, Choice, and Party Identification.” *Journal of Politics* 77(1): 55–71.
- Corbacho, Ana, Daniel W. Gingerich, Virginia Oliveros, and Mauricio Ruiz-Vega. 2016. “Corruption as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Costa Rica.” *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 1077–92.
- Costas-Pérez, Elena, Albert Solé-Ollé, and Pilar Sorribas-Navarro. 2012. “Corruption Scandals, Voter Information, and Accountability.” *European Journal of Political Economy* 28(4): 469–84.
- Curini, Luigi. 2017. *Corruption, Ideology, and Populism: The Rise of Valence Political Campaigning*. New York: Palgrave.
- Curini, Luigi, and Paolo Martelli. 2015. “A Case of Valence Competition in Elections: Parties’ Emphasis on Corruption in Electoral Manifestos.” *Party Politics* 21(5): 686–98.
- Deininger, Klaus, and Paul Mpuga. 2005. “Does Greater Accountability Improve the Quality of Public Service Delivery ? Evidence from Uganda.” *World Development* 33(1): 171–91.
- Ferraz, Claudio, and Frederico Finan. 2008. “Exposing Corrupt Politicians: The Effects of Brazil’s Publicly Released Audits on Electoral Outcomes.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (May): 703–45.
- Gambetta, Diego. 2009. “Signaling.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*, eds. Peter Hedstrom and Peter Bearman. New York: Oxford University Press, 168–94.
- Gans-Morse, Jordan. et al. 2018. “Reducing Bureaucratic Corruption: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on What Works.” *World Development* 105: 171–88.
- Hegghammer, Thomas. 2012. “The Recruiter’s Dilemma: Signalling and Rebel Recruitment Tactics.” *Journal of Peace Research* 50: 3–16.
- Holland, Alisha C. 2018. "Diminished Expectations: Redistributive preferences in truncated welfare states." *World Politics* 70(4): 555-594.
- Johnston, Michael. 2012. “Building a Social Movement Against Corruption.” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 18(2): 21.
- . 2014. *Corruption, Contention and Reform: The Power of Deep Democratization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kostadinova, Tatiana. 2009. “Abstain or Rebel: Corruption Perceptions in East Europe.” *Politics & Policy* 37(4): 691–714.
- Lee-Jones, Krista. 2018 *Country profile: Tunisia - Overview of corruption and anti-corruption*.

- Bergen. Available at: <https://www.u4.no/publications/country-profile-tunisia.pdf> (Accessed: 18 January 2021).
- Lodge, Tom. 1998. "Political Corruption in South Africa." *African Affairs* 97: 157–87.
- . 2014. "Neo-Patrimonial Politics in the ANC." *African Affairs* 97: 37–41.
- Mungiu-Pippidi, Alina. 2016. "The Quest for Good Governance : Learning from Virtuous Circles." *Journal of Democracy* 27(1): 95–109.
- Olver, Crispian. 2017. *How to Steal a City: The Battle for Nelson Mandela Bay*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- Pavão, Nara. 2019. "Corruption, Courts, and Public Opinion in Brazil." In *Corruption in Latin America: How Politicians and Corporations Steal from Citizens*, ed. Robert Rotberg. Cham: Springer, 93–107.
- Peiffer, Caryn, and Linda Alvarez. 2016. "Who Will Be the 'Principled-Principals'? Perceptions of Corruption and Willingness to Engage in Anticorruption Activism." *Governance* 29(3): 351–69.
- Persson, Anna, Bo Rothstein, and Jan Teorell. 2013. "Why Anticorruption Reforms Fail- Systemic Corruption as a Collective Action Problem." *Governance* 26(3): 449–71.
- Rothstein, Bo, and Dietlind Stolle. 2008. "The State and Social Capital: An Institutional Theory of Generalized Trust." *Comparative Politics* 40(4): 441–59.
- Sberna, Salvatore, and Alberto Vannucci. 2013. "'It's the Politics, Stupid !' The Politicization of Anti-Corruption in Italy." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 60: 565–93.
- Schnakenberg, Keith E, and Ian R Turner. 2019. "Signaling with Reform: How the Threat of Corruption Prevents Informed Policymaking." *American Political Science Review* 113(3): 762–777.
- Seligson, Mitchell A. 2006. "The Measurement and Impact of Corruption Victimization: Survey Evidence from Latin America." *World Development* 34(2): 381–404..
- Serra, Danila. 2012. "Combining Top-down and Bottom-up Accountability: Evidence from a Bribery Experiment." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 28(3): 569–87.
- de Sousa, Luís. 2008. "I Don't Bribe , I Just Pull Strings : Assessing the Fluidity of Social Representations of Corruption in Portuguese Society." *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 5854(May): 8–23.
- Spence, Michael. 1973. "Job Market Signaling." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 87(3): 355–74.
- Tyler, Tom R. 2006. "Psychological Perspective on Legitimacy and Legitimation." *Annual Review of Psychology* 57: 375–400.
- Uslaner, Eric M. 2008. *Corruption, Inequality and the Rule of Law*. Cambridge University Press.
- Vannucci, Alberto. 2009. "The Controversial Legacy of ' Mani Pulite ' : A Critical Analysis of Italian Corruption and Anti-Corruption Policies." *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 2(April): 233–64.
- De Vries, Catherine E, and Hector Solaz. 2017. "The Electoral Consequences of Corruption." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20: 391–408.
- Warren, Mark E. 2004. "What Does Corruption Mean in a Democracy?" *American Journal of*

Political Science 48(2): 328–43.

Winters, Matthew S, and Rebecca Weitz-shapiro. 2013. “Lacking Information or Condoning Corruption When Do Voters Support Corrupt Politicians ?” *Comparative Politics* 45(4): 418–36.

Yerkes, S, and M Muasher. 2017. “Tunisia’s Corruption Contagion: A Transition at Risk.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Vol 25.

Zhang, Yahong, and Min-Hyu Kim. 2018. “Do Public Corruption Convictions Influence Citizens’ Trust in Government? The Answer Might Not Be a Simple Yes or No.” *American Review of Public Administration* 48(7): 685–98.

Tables

[in text tables, approximate position indicated in text]

Table 1. Perceptions of Corruption, Courts, and Politicians in South African and Tunisia

| | South Africa | Tunisia |
|--|--------------|---------|
| Perceptions of Corruption | | |
| most/ all MPs corrupt | 45.7 | 43.9 |
| most/ all government officials corrupt | 45.6 | 42.4 |
| level of corruption increased a lot last year | 49.6 | 59.4 |
| government doing very badly fighting corruption | 45.3 | 51.2 |
| Perceptions of Courts | | |
| most/ all judges corrupt | 35.3 | 22.4 |
| no /little trust in courts | 46.2 | 33.0 |
| officials often/ always go unpunished | 63.8 | 80.4 |
| Trust in Politics | | |
| no/ little trust in parliament | 66.2 | 76.5 |
| no/ little trust in local council | 69.3 | 63.7 |
| <i>Note: Data from Round 7, Afrobarometer Figures indicate the percentage of respondents in each country holding a specific attitude.</i> | | |
| Impartiality and Efficiency in Criminal Justice | | |
| <i>Impartiality</i> | 0.55 | 0.35 |
| <i>Timely and effective adjudication</i> | 0.52 | 0.46 |
| <i>Note: Data from The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2020. The scores range from 0 to 1, where 1 signifies the highest possible score and 0 signifies the lowest possible score.</i> | | |

Table 2. Vignette Dimensions

| ranking | <u>High</u> <i>high ranking</i> | <u>Low</u> <i>low ranking</i> |
|------------|--|--|
| efficiency | <u>Efficient</u> <i>The courts gave priority to these corruption cases. It did not take a long time to gather all the necessary evidence and proceed to trial.</i> | <u>Inefficient</u> <i>The courts did not give priority to these corruption cases. It took a very long time to gather all the necessary evidence and proceed to trial.</i> |
| partiality | <u>Impartial</u> <i>the trial was fair and the judges were not at all influenced by political pressure.</i> | <u>Partial</u> <i>the trial was unfair and the judges were strongly influenced by political pressure.</i> |

Table 3. Efficiency and Impartiality as Credible Signals

| | (1) | (2) |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| | courts working | convictions |
| efficiency | 0.129*** (0.0227) | 0.543 (0.355) |
| impartiality | 0.244*** (0.0228) | 1.438*** (0.355) |
| Observations | 1897 | 1834 |

Controls: country, stratum, age, gender, employment, unemployment salience, corruption salience, trust in politicians, support for government party, support for opposition party. Standard errors in parentheses.

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 4. Citizen Channel

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | citizen efficacy | bribe norms | citizen efficacy | bribe norms |
| efficiency | -0.006 (0.053) | -0.044 (0.056) | -0.005 (0.053) | -0.044 (0.056) |
| impartiality | 0.033 (0.053) | -0.004 (0.056) | 0.042 (0.074) | -0.030 (0.078) |
| petty corrupt. | | | 0.008 (0.076) | -0.009 (0.079) |
| impart*petty | | | -0.017 (0.107) | 0.053 (0.111) |
| Observations | 1966 | 1969 | 1966 | 1969 |

Controls: country, stratum, age, gender, employment, unemployment salience, corruption salience, trust in politicians, support for government party, support for opposition party. Standard errors in parentheses.

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 5. Institutional Channel

| | (1) trust courts | (2) support spending | (3) trust courts | (4) support spending |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| efficiency | 0.017 (0.054) | 0.081 (0.059) | 0.018 (0.054) | 0.082 (0.059) |
| impartiality | 0.125* (0.054) | 0.049 (0.059) | 0.041 (0.078) | -0.097 (0.084) |
| grand corrupt. | | | -0.150+ (0.078) | -0.197* (0.084) |
| impart*grand | | | 0.166 (0.109) | 0.287* (0.118) |
| Observations | 1956 | 1967 | 1956 | 1967 |

Controls: country, stratum, age, gender, employment, unemployment salience, corruption salience, trust in politicians, support for government party, support for opposition party. Standard errors in parentheses.

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 6. Trust in Politics and Institutional Channel

| | (1) | (2) convictions | (3) support spending | (4) support spending |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| efficiency | 0.108*** (0.026) | 0.357 (0.386) | 0.059 (0.064) | 0.054 (0.064) |
| impartiality | 0.259*** (0.026) | 1.635*** (0.386) | 0.115+ (0.064) | -0.002 (0.091) |
| grand corrupt. | | | | -0.190* (0.092) |
| impart*grand | | | | 0.220+ (0.128) |
| Observations | 1085 | 1038 | 1052 | 1052 |

Controls: country, stratum, age, gender, employment, unemployment salience, corruption salience, trust in politicians, support for government party, support for opposition party. Standard errors in parentheses.
+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Appendix

[as online appendix]

Appendix A. Additional Tables

Table A.1. *Sample Demographics by Country*

| | South Africa | Tunisia |
|----------------------|--------------|---------|
| | mean | mean |
| age | 35.45 | 43.96 |
| female | 0.61 | 0.61 |
| permanently employed | 0.21 | 0.09 |
| secondary completed | 0.65 | 0.52 |
| electricity | 0.96 | 0.98 |
| pipied water | 0.87 | 0.88 |
| flush toilet | 0.69 | 0.77 |
| own TV | 0.88 | 0.95 |
| own computer | 0.23 | 0.33 |
| own fridge | 0.88 | 0.95 |
| own car | 0.26 | 0.27 |

Table A.2. Descriptive Statistics of Outcome Variables

| | mean | Sd | min | max | count |
|------------------|-------|------|-----|-----|-------|
| courts working | 0.35 | 0.48 | 0 | 1 | 1931 |
| convictions | 10.03 | 7.82 | 0 | 20 | 1868 |
| citizen efficacy | 3.54 | 1.20 | 1 | 5 | 2008 |
| bribe norms | 3.67 | 1.32 | 1 | 5 | 2015 |
| trust in courts | 2.92 | 1.25 | 1 | 5 | 1992 |
| support spending | 3.07 | 1.31 | 1 | 5 | 2004 |

Table A.3. Efficiency and Impartiality - no controls

| | (1) courts working | (2) convictions |
|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| efficiency | 0.128*** (0.0222) | 0.586+ (0.353) |
| impartiality | 0.241*** (0.0223) | 1.288*** (0.353) |
| South Africa | 0.0274 (0.0222) | -3.274*** (0.354) |
| Constant | | 10.83*** (0.359) |
| Observations | 1931 | 1868 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.4. Citizen Channel - No Controls

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | efficacy | bribe norms | efficacy | bribe norms |
| efficiency | -0.020 (0.053) | -0.040 (0.056) | -0.020 (0.053) | -0.041 (0.056) |
| impartiality | 0.017 (0.053) | -0.005 (0.056) | 0.007 (0.074) | -0.018 (0.077) |
| petty corrupt. | | | -0.015 (0.075) | 0.032 (0.079) |
| impart*petty | | | 0.021 (0.105) | 0.029 (0.111) |
| South Africa | -0.457*** (0.053) | -0.878*** (0.056) | -0.457*** (0.053) | -0.879*** (0.056) |
| Constant | 3.760*** (0.052) | 4.113*** (0.055) | 3.768*** (0.064) | 4.098*** (0.068) |
| Observations | 2008 | 2015 | 2008 | 2015 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.5. Institutional Channel - No Controls

| | (1) trust courts | (2) support spending | (3) trust courts | (4) support spending |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| efficiency | 0.015 (0.056) | 0.071 (0.059) | 0.016 (0.056) | 0.072 (0.059) |
| impartiality | 0.127* (0.056) | 0.034 (0.059) | 0.027 (0.080) | -0.092 (0.084) |
| grand corrupt. | | | -0.152+ (0.080) | -0.189* (0.084) |
| impart*grand | | | 0.197+ (0.112) | 0.249* (0.117) |
| South Africa | -0.121* (0.056) | 0.102+ (0.059) | -0.119* (0.056) | 0.104+ (0.059) |
| Constant | 2.903*** (0.056) | 2.970*** (0.058) | 2.979*** (0.068) | 3.063*** (0.072) |
| Observations | 1992 | 2004 | 1992 | 2004 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Appendix B – Results by Country

Table B.1 *Signals - South Africa*

| | (1) courts working | (2) convictions |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| efficiency | 0.0484 (0.0320) | 0.116 (0.474) |
| impartiality | 0.242*** (0.0323) | 1.842*** (0.475) |
| Observations | 958 | 986 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table B.2 *Signals - Tunisia*

| | (1) courts working | (2) convictions |
|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| efficiency | 0.214*** (0.0320) | 1.022+ (0.536) |
| impartiality | 0.248*** (0.0321) | 1.057* (0.535) |
| Observations | 939 | 848 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table B.3 Citizen Channel- South Africa

| | (1) citizen efficacy | (2) bribe norms | (3) citizen efficacy | (4) bribe norms |
|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| efficiency | -0.022 (0.073) | 0.050 (0.080) | -0.024 (0.073) | 0.049 (0.080) |
| impartiality | 0.060 (0.073) | 0.113 (0.080) | -0.046 (0.103) | 0.056 (0.112) |
| petty corrupt. | | | -0.093 (0.105) | -0.061 (0.115) |
| impart*petty | | | 0.215 (0.147) | 0.117 (0.160) |
| Observations | 971 | 960 | 971 | 960 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table B.4 Citizen Channel- Tunisia

| | (1) citizen efficacy | (2) bribe norms | (3) citizen efficacy | (4) bribe norms |
|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| efficiency | 0.023 (0.077) | -0.121 (0.075) | 0.025 (0.077) | -0.121 (0.076) |
| impartiality | 0.010 (0.077) | -0.091 (0.076) | 0.127 (0.107) | -0.089 (0.105) |
| petty corrupt. | | | 0.100 (0.109) | 0.003 (0.107) |
| impart*petty | | | -0.245 (0.154) | -0.004 (0.151) |
| Observations | 995 | 1009 | 995 | 1009 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table B.5 Institutional Channel - South Africa

| | (1) trust courts | (2) support spending | (3) trust courts | (4) support spending |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| efficiency | 0.045 (0.074) | 0.040 (0.078) | 0.045 (0.074) | 0.042 (0.078) |
| impartiality | 0.120 (0.074) | 0.138+ (0.078) | 0.073 (0.106) | -0.005 (0.110) |
| grand corrupt. | | | -0.110 (0.108) | -0.192+ (0.112) |
| impart*grand | | | 0.092 (0.150) | 0.284+ (0.156) |
| Observations | 979 | 975 | 979 | 975 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table B.6 Institutional Channel - Tunisia

| | (1) trust courts | (2) support spending | (3) trust courts | (4) support spending |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| efficiency | -0.023 (0.080) | 0.142 (0.088) | -0.020 (0.080) | 0.143 (0.088) |
| impartiality | 0.149+ (0.080) | -0.003 (0.088) | 0.013 (0.116) | -0.05 (0.128) |
| grand corrupt. | | | -0.189+ (0.113) | -0.195 (0.125) |
| impart*grand | | | 0.263 (0.160) | 0.296+ (0.177) |
| Observations | 977 | 992 | 977 | 992 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001