

The issue of corruption in the government plans submitted by candidates for the Municipality of Lima 2018

La temática de corrupción en los planes de gobierno de los candidatos a la Municipalidad de Lima 2018



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Abstract:

This article seeks to analyze the way in which the Lima mayoral candidates present, mention, or approach the issue of corruption in their government plans presented to the National Jury of Elections. The plans of the three main candidates to the mayoral office of Lima will be analyzed according to opinion polls using the content analysis method. In the government plans presented to the electoral authority, corruption and the relevant topics have been identified. It was found that the candidates did not place much importance on the issue of corruption, even though Lima's populace considers it one of the greatest issues. Upon scrutiny of the plans, a declarative logic with little real argumentation is observed. There is however a certain recurrence to speeches that implicitly disrupt the understanding of tolerance to corruption. These speeches furthermore frame the fight against corruption as a war, which invites us to latently reflect on the reason for the recurrence of these speeches, and their use by candidates.

Keywords:

Fight against corruption; municipal government plans; content analysis; war; tolerance of corruption.

Resumen:

El presente artículo intenta analizar la forma cómo los candidatos a la alcaldía de Lima presentan, mencionan o enfocan el tema de corrupción en sus planes de gobierno presentados al Jurado Nacional de Elecciones. Se analizará los planes de los tres principales candidatos a ocupar la alcaldía de Lima según las encuestas de opinión a partir del análisis de contenido. En los planes de gobierno presentados ante la autoridad electoral se ha procedido a segmentar lo referente a dicha temática y a los tópicos relevantes. Se constató que los candidatos no le dan mucha importancia a la temática de corrupción, más allá que es considerado uno de los principales problemas para la población limeña. Se observa una lógica declarativa y poco argumentativa cuando se toca dicha temática; no obstante, se puede avizorar cierta recurrencia a discursos de una manera implícita que trastoca la forma de comprender la tolerancia a la corrupción y, la consideración de entender la lucha contra la corrupción como una guerra, que nos invita a reflexionar el porqué de la recurrencia de estos discursos de manera latente y su uso por parte de los candidatos.

Palabras clave:

Lucha contra la corrupción; planes de gobierno municipal; análisis de contenido; guerra; tolerancia a la corrupción.

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1. Introduction

The capital city of Peru, Lima, receives the greatest concentration of attention in subnational elections. This four-year electoral process involves the elections for district municipality and provincial authorities, as well as for regional governors. Lima is not only the capital of the country but that of the homonymous province, and enjoys the powers of a regional government. Therefore, its administrative functions are greater vis-a-vis those of any province in the country. Accordingly, this expansion in its functions implies that its budget is likewise increased.

The National Jury of Elections (NJE) oversees the procedures and regulations of the Peruvian electoral process. This autonomous body that administers justice in electoral matters has jurisdictional, supervisory, and educational functions¹. Regarding the latter, for the 2018 elections the NJE contemplated employing a platform called “Informed Voting”² by means of which citizens could compare the various government plans proposed by political groups. Submission of the plans by the groups was to be obligatory.

Although there was no template for the government plans to be submitted by the political groups, it was expected that certain public policies would be formulated to reflect any future forms of government. These submissions would thus have permitted observation of the proposals aimed at solving the main problems related to a specific locality. One of the main problems afflicting Lima is corruption; thus it would be expected that candidates address this problem within their government plans.

This article thus looks to analyze the way in which the candidates for the Municipality of Lima view and present corruption in the government plans presented to the NJE. To achieve the foregoing, a corpus has been built from the text sections where relevant information is present, as well as associated topics extracted from the government plans. The research analyzes content as a tool to help ascertain, beyond what is stated by the very candidates, if there is any recurring discourses that denote a certain undercurrent or a certain latent content.

As will be seen, the little importance is given to this problem in the government plans analyzed, and we do not only refer to the amount of information in the candidates’ respective government plans. It has been observed that the logic employed when referring to corruption presents little argumentation and is often merely declarative. The candidates observe certain causes and consequences of corruption, but are not able to establish appropriate public policies to tackle corruption. However, it is possible to identify certain discourses in the background that do question the premise of war and the tolerance of corruption.

1 For more details, see <https://portal.jne.gob.pe/portal/>

2 For more details, see <https://votoinformado.jne.gob.pe/voto>

2. Electoral Context and Problems in Lima

For these 2018 Lima mayoral elections there were 21 candidate lists registered. Opinion polls showed no real stand-out candidate. To observe this, it is enough to review the way public opinion moved in the last weeks prior to the municipal election. One week before the municipal elections, the candidate for *Podemos por el Progreso del Peru*, Daniel Urresti, had 14.8% of voter intention, followed by Renzo Reggiardo of *Perú Patria Segura*, who had 14.4 %, the *Acción Popular* candidate, Jorge Muñoz, had 12.1%, whilst the candidate from *Peru Libertario*, Ricardo Belmont, had a 6.8% voter intention. However, a month before the elections the panorama was different, as Renzo Reggiardo had 19% voter intention, followed by Ricardo Belmont with 15%, Daniel Urresti with 9%, and Alberto Beingolea of the *Partido Popular Cristiano* with 7%³.

This variety and number of candidates was also appreciated as, the electoral debate organized by the NJE, the regulatory entity of the electoral process, had to be held in two sessions. The two sessions were held in blocks for reasons of election issue coherency. The candidates' time for each presentation was very short, and they thus used their minutes to express their main proposals and many times to confront other candidates, not necessarily with the candidate they had to debate.

However, although the public's opinion varied in its electoral preferences, it did not do so much in expressing the main problems of Lima. The Observatory *Lima Cómo Vamos* [Lima, How Are We Going], in its IX Perception Report on Lima, observed that the four main problems were citizen insecurity (81.9%), public transportation (49.4%), corruption of officials (29.9%), and the cleanliness of public spaces (28.8%)⁴. It is worth mentioning that the two main problems have persisted since said Observatory began collecting information in its first survey in 2010; the third problem and fourth have been present since 2017. This is so as "Corruption of officials" was only then introduced as an alternative (*Lima Cómo Vamos* Report, 2018:8). Similarly, for Proetica, the Peruvian chapter of Transparency International, when surveying Lima's main problems, crime (67%) and corruption (50.5%)⁵ stood out as being constant problems in recent years.

The report by the Public Prosecutor's Office Specialized in Corruption Crimes (2018) corroborates these perceptions. The report revealed 37,625 cases of corruption, of which 11.22% of cases corresponded to investigations against regional and/or municipal authorities or former authorities. The department of Lima had the second highest amount of cases being heard by the courts. Vega and Elías (2020) also noted this situation as they mention that the municipalities are affected by corruption, as they have had mayors prosecuted and sentenced.

In attempting to highlight the issue of corruption in local government, a public institution, we can understand corruption as "the misuse of political-bureaucratic power by cliques of officials, in collusion with private interests (Quiroz 2013:38). This definition aligns closely to that of the World Bank in the early 1990s: "the abuse of public office for private benefit." Additionally, the High-Level Anti-Corruption Commission in Peru (2013) established that the act of corruption leads to improper use

3 For more details, see <https://www.ipsos.com/es-pe/elecciones-municipales-y-regionales-septiembre>

4 These percentages are due to the grouping of multiple responses. For more details, see: <http://www.limacomovamos.org/cm/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/EncuestaLimaComoVamos2018.pdf>

5 This information comes from the Tenth National Corruption Survey, based on multiple responses. For more details, see: <https://www.proetica.org.pe/eventos/proetica-presentara-nueva-encuesta-nacional-corrupcion-peru/>

of power with the intention of obtaining a benefit that would not be possible by other legal forms. However, this does not diminish the fact that this concept has different nuances, which makes investigating it difficult (Huber 2017). This complexity is manifested by its complicated rationality and high cultural variability (Torsello 2013), and also because it is intertwined with other forms of social exchange (Theobald 1990).

Therefore, Lima's municipal election was contested by many candidates, some leading the polls, but none with any salient tendency. Meanwhile the main problems for the population were the issues of crime or citizen insecurity, and corruption.

As mentioned by Muñoz (2010), municipalities enjoy political, administrative, and economic autonomy within their competency; and they are not just a local government that executes or plans local development management (Vega and Elias, 2020), therefore, they must be considered, as a whole, as an autonomous body of local government.

Although corruption has been studied at a local level from various perspectives (Huber 2017, 2008, Mujica 2006, 2005, Pajuelo 2009), little has been studied on the relationship between local government, politics, and local development (Muñoz 2010). The same has occurred in the relationship between the mayor's office and the municipal council in terms of actively fighting corruption (Vega and Elias 2020). It must be said that local governments can within their competences carry out integrity and anti-corruption policies, thereby demonstrating, as Bertranou (2011) mentions, their state capacities. The foregoing should be analyzed not in the abstract but according to set tasks and objectives. Therefore, the relevance of the government plans becomes important because candidates should establish what they intend to undertake if they become the local government and, above all, how they plan to do it.

3. Methodology

3.1. Content Analysis

The technique of content analysis has been widely applied in studies of communication sciences; however, gradually it has expanded to varied fields of research such as social and political sciences. For Krippendorff (1997:28) the content analysis technique "is intended to formulate, based on certain data, reproducible inferences that can be applied to its context." The interesting thing about this definition is that from the acquisition of certain data it is possible to make inferences about a given context, and also that these inferences can be reproduced by other researchers. The context must also be mentioned, since it is in the context where the messages or speeches are proffered, analyzed, and observed, and it is from there where the meaning and latent speeches begin to be analyzed.

Bardín (1996:32) specifies that content analysis looks to build indicators, being either quantitative or qualitative; however, to build them, systematic procedures are followed in order to describe message content, thereby allowing to identify inference of the content, both in terms of production and reception. From these procedures it is possible to understand the inference of the content. In this regard, Burnete (2014:229) indicates that inference is what makes content analysis distinctive, and is what allows moving from the descriptive to the interpretive.

Insofar as being able to investigate information about the content, Krinppendorf (1997:32) also states that this method seeks to investigate the symbolic meaning of the messages. However, he warns of two situations: on the one hand, that the messages do not necessarily have a single meaning; and on the other hand, congruence of the meanings is not required. The first situation refers to the fact that messages can have various meanings and transmit various types of content. Meanwhile, although the second situation accepts there may be consensus about what a message conveys, this does not mean that the entire message is covered, so it is possible to find new meanings.

In content analysis, the process of constructing meaning strengthens through these indicators or ways of observing messages and content, as does the meaning that the researcher derives from the text. Likewise, in this analysis it is necessary to emphasize the explicit meaning observed in the text and the underlying meaning, also transmitted by the text, but through the prism of the context from where one is situated, as when the underlying meaning is revealed, it has to make sense in that context.

The context recovers a value in the content analysis; however, this technique also seeks to make the inference and to be recognized as part of the scientific investigation. Consequently, the technique has certain rules. Per Bardin (1996), content analysis has three phases: the first phase is pre-analysis, the second involves data collection and processing, and the last focuses on interpretation and inference. Bernete (2014), moreover states that in this technique there are three stages: the initial preparatory stage, the second of data collection, and the third of analysis and interpretation.

In this technique, the difference between the manifest and latent levels is often made. At the manifest level, the processed and systematized information stands out; and at the latent level, the inference from what is stated in the text is most evident, trying to reveal that what is underlying. In this research, what is manifested will be expressed in the government plans of the selected candidates; while the latent will be revealed through what is manifested, what the candidates try to manifest in an underlying way, trying to make the inference.

3.2. Methodological Design

The purpose of this research is to analyze the issue of corruption in the government plans of the candidates for the Lima province mayor's office, as submitted to the National Jury of Elections, the governing body of the Peruvian electoral process.

The hypothesis proposed for this research states that when incorporating the issue corruption in government plans, candidates do not express a logic of the problem, as the discourse communication is declarative and poorly substantiated in nature. Although this communication describes the problem by stating certain causes and consequences, it only emphasizes certain actors and functions within municipal government. Nevertheless, the government plans do manage to express, although not explicitly, certain recurring discourses for the Peruvian context.

3.3. Unit of Analysis

For the analysis, we will work with the municipal government plans that the three main mayoral candidates for Lima presented to the National Jury of Elections. Said candidates have been selected according to public opinion polls of the week prior to the elections. From these government plans, we have segmented the sections or paragraphs where the term “corruption” is present, and we have additionally considered frameworks such as transparency and ethics. The foregoing topics constitute the unit of analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Recurrence to the theme of corruption and topics

The three candidates do not address the issue of corruption to any great depth in their government plans⁶. None of the candidates analyzed has a specific section on this issue, which in itself demonstrates its unimportance to them. The absence of corruption occurs despite the fact that public opinion considers this issue to be one of Lima’s central problems.

As there is no separate section on corruption, we have identified the paragraphs alluding to corruption and also the reference topics of transparency and ethics for analysis. The number of paragraphs included in each of the government plans does not exceed one page, representing less than 1.5% of the content of the government plans.

Table 1. Number of paragraphs

Candidate	Government plan	Issue of corruption
Jorge Munoz	64 pages	9 paragraphs (1 page)
Daniel Urresti	67 pages	8 paragraphs (1 page)
Renzo Reggiardo	152 pages	2 paragraphs (less than 1 page)

Source: Government plans presented to the NJE. Compiled by author

In the government plan of Jorge Muñoz, of the *Acción Popular* political party, reference to corruption can be seen in two sections: in the Municipal Anti-Corruption Office and in the Municipal Ethics Line. This government plan is the only one in which small sections related to the issue of corruption have been established; however, all this information only covers one page.

⁶ It must be said that the government plans do not have a fixed or determined structure, but rather depend on the example presented by the political party.

In the government plan of Daniel Urresti, of the political party *Podemos*, reference to corruption is made in the principles section, in the background, fundamentals of the new administration, initial diagnosis, the economic dimension, and in the institutional dimension. Although recurrence is observed in several sections, which could suggest a large amount of information, they do not constitute more than one page. They repeat many times what was mentioned in previous sections, and even verbatim.

On the other hand, in the government plan of Renzo Reggiardo, of the *Patria Segura* party, corruption only appears in two paragraphs: in the Ethics section and in the Health section. Of the three government plans analyzed, this submission contained the least amount of information on this subject.

4.2. *The fight against corruption and how to confront it*

The analyzed candidates understand corruption is a problem, but they propose no alternatives or programmed solutions to solve it. There are noises made that it must be confronted in the usual terms of the fight against corruption, which the three candidates do mention.

For Renzo Reggiardo, corruption is understood from a fight perspective: “That is why it is our commitment to become true soldiers in the fight against corruption.” It should be noted that this very phrase is mentioned in the ethics section of his government plan. As it is a problem understood as a “struggle”, the best way to tackle it is “to become true soldiers”. This assertion attempts to best frame this problem as a war, an enemy to confront, where the candidate will be a soldier in the fight against corruption. Further on, the plan asserts that to wage this war, a politician has to seek “honesty and transparency.” The candidate announces a certain way of confronting corruption, but does not express how this honest or transparent behavior should be. He thus leaves the communication only in the declarative and poorly reasoned, thereby losing the message’s impact.

Daniel Urresti of *Podemos* likewise includes corruption in the Principles section that guides his party’s mandate. He states that his government will prioritize “the permanent fight against corruption, drug trafficking, and crime.” Unlike Reggiardo, Urresti establishes that corruption, together with similarly salient problems, has to be confronted. In the section on ideological bases, Urresti emphasizes that these three problems must be combated, categorically; however, there is no mention of how this will be done or which actors will be involved. The idea of fighting is repeated, as if this problem had to be confronted or fought, but it continues to be left in the declarative.

Jorge Muñoz of *Acción Popular* also alludes to the fight against corruption. However, he establishes certain ways in which it could be confronted and states that this could be done by executing actions or management measures and developing spaces for citizen participation. As such, the population would have to play a role as “overseer” but Muñoz does not state what steps or strategies would have to be taken or how citizen participation would be welcomed from the internal management itself. Although he proposes a certain action compared to the other two candidates, the procedure for channeling this citizen participation is absent.

The three candidates express that corruption has to be fought, yet they do not establish ways or strategies of how to confront it in any specific manner. However, this idea of fighting corruption conjures the idea of confrontation, being on a war footing.

The same is also reflected in the discourses of the candidates when they mention being soldiers, or confronting or combating corruption categorically.

4.3. *Causes and consequences of corruption*

An attempt has been made to discern whether the candidates somehow express the causes and/or consequences of corruption. However, the candidates only mention these, without identifying anything in particular.

Daniel Urresti believes the problems that Lima is experiencing, such as insecurity, traffic congestion, and violence, are due to “lack of leadership, corruption in management, and lack of planning.” Accordingly, corruption in municipal management is the cause of Lima’s most salient problems due to this lack of leadership and absence of planning. Corruption is thus reduced to personification in the forms of previous city mayors. Urresti also points out that in previous administrations there have been “clear indications of corruption and lack of technical management⁷.” This combination constitutes the fundamental problems experienced by a discontented populace:

“There is a recurrent corruption of the administrations disguised as overvalued and inefficient projects, which in addition to facilitating corruption, have not even attenuated the minimum basic problems of the population, which feels deeply disappointed and outraged.”

Urresti states that corruption in previous municipal administrations is the cause of Lima’s main problems, which have consequently created discontent in the population. Although he alludes to a certain relationship between these situations, and that this corruption is observed in overvalued projects, Urresti does not state how this overvaluation has been observed, how it has been measured, or even how inefficiency is verified. Likewise, when expressing the discontent of the population, he does not substantiate how said discontent has been observed. However, this candidate at least identifies a cause of corruption and a consequence.

Candidate Renzo Reggiardo on the other hand does not point out the possible causes of corruption, but shows a certain consequence of it. Referring specifically to health, Reggiardo mentions that the corresponding budget has been under resourced, and even much lower compared to neighboring countries. He also adds that this budget is “wilted by inefficiency and corruption” and causes social exclusion in terms of access to health. Thus, although corruption implies a certain social exclusion for the population, this candidate does not argue how this social exclusion is observed and how corruption has produced this consequence.

Jorge Muñoz states certain causes of corruption, but does not enumerate any possible consequences. He declares that one of the main causes of corruption is bureaucracy, since “it is one of the convenient breeding grounds that facilitate conditions for illicit behavior.” Although he identifies bureaucracy as the cause, the candidate does not determine why bureaucracy is convenient or why it facilitates this type of behavior. As Muñoz identifies bureaucracy as the cause, it must be understood that those implied would be the employees of the municipality, for which the candidate has nominated himself.

7 Explicit reference has been made to the fall of the Solidaridad bridge, for more details see: <https://rpp.pe/lima/actualidad/la-caida-de-puente-solidaridad-causo-un-perjuicio-de-5-millones-de-soles-segun-controleria-noticia-1124514>

When referring to the possible causes, two candidates posit that previous administrations and bureaucracy are factors. This then supposes reference is made to both the mayor and the staff who have worked or work there. Conversely, a third candidate does not identify anyone as to not confront others. It should be noted that the mayor of the previous administration was Luis Castañeda Lossio, who has been the mayor of Lima several times. In his previous administrations, this mayor made health and constructing solidarity hospitals a priority. But as we have observed, the candidates criticize previous administrations. Urresti mentions indices of corruption and lack of technical management, precisely the opposite of what Castañeda bragged about: that he was a technically minded person. It is not for nothing that Reggiardo identifies the issue of health in his government plan when he mentions corruption; and that Jorge Muñoz indicates bureaucracy when referring to the personnel working in the municipality and who had worked for previous administrations.

Certain consequences generated by corruption such as discontent and social exclusion are observed. Urresti suggests that there may be corruption due to overvalued projects, which shows a certain cause of the problem; however, it is not discussed or described in any depth. Furthermore, Urresti seeks to highlight the idea that there is a certain inefficiency, which has not solved fundamental problems, thus implying that what is “overvalued” can be permitted if it supposes a certain efficiency in the improvement of the fundamental problems for the populace. The foregoing justifies in a certain way the colloquial premise of “does work, but steals.”

4.4. *The idea of transparency*

Daniel Urresti and Renzo Reggiardo are the only candidates that mention the notion of transparency. Urresti states that transparency must be promoted energetically:

“The administration will be intolerant of the corruption of municipal officials and workers, while promoting transparency in municipal spending and companies belonging to the municipality.”

This promotion of transparency is related to municipal spending and municipal companies: entities that manage municipal funds. Transparency is prioritized in these institutions, however, it is not mentioned in what form the process of promoting transparency in spending or in municipal companies will be, or which actors will participate. Urresti only stresses that the administration will be intolerant.

This idea of transparency in Urresti’s government plan also relates it to the accountability process as causes of corruption: “The lack of transparency and deficient accountability open windows for corruption that obstruct the practices of good governance.” However, it is not clear why there is poor accountability, or how such a conclusion has been reached, let alone how poor accountability fosters corruption. Nor does he mention how citizen participation or neighborhood associations could be included in this accountability process.

Reggiardo also alludes to transparency, but only uses it to highlight “the commitment to transparency” within public management. He does not however indicate how he would proceed or the transparency mechanisms he would use, thus leaving the discourse only declarative in nature.

4.5. *The notion of Ethics*

Only candidate Jorge Muñoz mentions ethics in his government plan. That said, he does not relate it as a way of proceeding or acting for public officials, or a training strategy for municipal officials. Muñoz states that creating a municipal ethics line will imply only one channel for receiving complaints, where different mechanisms will be incorporated: email, telephone line, and social networks. Therefore, this idea of ethics is translated as being a reception desk for complaints, and as indicated, the government plan of said candidate will promote certain incentives to report cases of corruption. There is nonetheless no mention of the procedure of how the municipality will act upon receiving the complaints, the type of incentives, or how the information will be processed, or even what follow-up mechanisms will be implemented.

5. Discussion: background in the candidate government plans

The candidates mention very little in their government plans, and what there is, is declarative and poorly reasoned. The situation reinforces Majone (1997) who states that political speech is often declarative address and poorly substantiated. Yet, we can pick out a certain background in these plans. From there, we have grouped two salient dilemmas: the issue of considering the fight against corruption as if it were a war, and the recurrence or tolerance of corruption implied in the phrase “does work, but steals.”

5.1. *The fight against corruption considered as a war*

As we have observed, mayoral candidates approach the issue of the fight against corruption from a bellicose perspective. They frequently talk of fighting it, confronting it, becoming soldiers, however, they do not reliably identify who or what they would have to defeat or fight, or if there are factions or allies, or, at least, identify who personifies the enemy. The candidates mention bureaucracy or previous administrations as possible causes of corruption, implying that these should be combated. However, they do not specify the way to approach corruption or any corresponding strategies to implement. On the other hand, this lack of identification can imply not wanting to “fight” with anyone, and reinforces the idea of being declarative only.

But what is the benefit of referring to a logic of war? We will see that it is not gratuitous. First of all, it should be noted that the Republic of Peru suffered through a period of political violence between 1980 and 2000. Subversive groups confronted the State, which, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, Spanish acronym), produced around 70,000 victims, dead and missing (CVR, 2003, Annex 2:15). The subversive groups (*Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) and *MRTA*) and the armed and police forces (CVR, 2013: Conclusions) were both party to certain human rights violations. However, after this report⁸, employing the idea that Peru is living a war is commonplace, and that one way to “win” is to “eliminate the other.” Therefore, that the remnants of the *Sendero Luminoso* in the Peruvian jungle⁹ must be eliminated is frequently pronounced. This thought is reinforced when the aforementioned groups attack a police or military post.

8 It should also be noted that there are political groups, such as Fujimorism, that do not accept this report. This is above all because it is stated that these were victims during the government of Alberto Fujimori, today convicted of human rights crimes and corruption.

9 The remnants of *Sendero Luminoso* are found in the valleys of the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro rivers (VRAEM).

This idea of war involving eliminating the other has also been transferred to other issues. In the decade of the 2010s, crime and citizen insecurity began to emerge as the country's main problem in public opinion¹⁰. There was consequently also talk that the solution was to eliminate criminals, rapists, and kidnappers¹¹, so much so that some candidates, authorities, and journalists announced the best answer to curb crime would be to have the army to patrol the streets to mitigate any potential crime¹². As such, the use of war took another form in the discourse, making it more recurrent in other spaces.

This discourse of “eliminating the other” has been changing or evolving over the years. It is no longer common to speak of treating the other in such a way. Nevertheless, the attitude required to confront problems is one of firmness: an unhesitating “iron fist.” Regarding the foregoing, it is commonplace to hear that one must be firm in fighting corruption, against delinquency, and against other problems. This however is also true against people who may commit such acts of corruption and crime. In this regard, Zechmeister (2015) indicates that some Latin American countries have been subject to right-wing dictatorships or authoritarian regimes associated with repressing social protests and these were more prone to use a “firm hand” to maintain social order.

The foregoing was manifest when the Fujimori government of between 1990 and 2000 monopolized all levels of government and was involved in human rights and corruption problems¹³. Similarly, the political party *Fuerza Popular* is in tune with right-wing postulates. Therefore, it is not for nothing to hear Keiko Fujimori stress that problems must be confronted firmly, so much so that in the first round election debate, she stated that crime and insecurity must be dealt with a firm hand¹⁴.

In the same sense, Meléndez (2013) considers that in its rhetoric *Fujimorismo* contemplates a certain right-wing partisan identification, which justifies strong-arm measures against perceived threats such as terrorism, economic instability, and crime. Dargent (2021) also states that *Fujimorismo* is a “very Latin American conservative” party, which has made an attachment to the status quo. Likewise, it would not be gratuitous, as Sulmont (2018) mentions, that Keiko Fujimori uses a “firm hand” in her campaigns on tackling society's greatest problem: citizen insecurity. She was the alternative candidate because she would boldly confront insecurity. She continues to use this discourse, as in the last interview where she mentions that she will act with a firm hand¹⁵. She does so as to align with a certain group in the population. Dargent (2021) points out that parties express these “simplistic” ways of reform, especially those parties he calls “popular conservatives”, in order to have a

10 You can access the Ipsos Peru polls, <https://www.ipsos.com/es-pe/news-and-polls/news>

11 <https://www.americatv.com.pe/noticias/actualidad/pena-muerte-peru-quienes-estan-favor-y-contran-297385>, <https://peru21.pe/opinion/ensayos-impopulares-aldo-mariategui/death-penalty-382392-news/>

12 For more details, see <https://peru.com/actualidad/mi-ciudad/philip-butters-sobre-seguridad-ciudadana-ejercito-deberia-salir-patruillar-calles-noticia-125777>, <https://canaln.pe/actualidad/fuerzas-armadas-no-pueden-salir-calle-combatir-delinuencia-n199845>, <https://peru21.pe/lima/cesar-acuna-fuerzas-armadas-deben-salir-patruillar-calles-194125-noticia/>

13 Currently, Alberto Fujimori is serving a sentence for crimes against humanity and corruption.

14 See <https://elcomercio.pe/politica/keiko-fujimori-asegura-que-con-decision-politica-y-mano-dura-rescatara-al-pais-de-esta-tragedia-sanitaria-y-economica-fuerza-popular-elecciones-2021-debate-el-comercio-nndc-noticia/>

15 Interview conducted in January 2021, <https://rpp.pe/politica/elecciones/keiko-fujimori-explica-la-mano-dura-es-la-firmeza-contr-el-delito-pequeno-y-comun-noticia-1317652>

correlate as voters do not demand details either. They allow themselves to be carried away by the high-flown or striking nature of the proposal, but ignore the processes or ways in which a reform may be implemented as such.

Although a reconfiguration has been observed -- no longer considering a problem as war, but to deal with it using a firm hand -- this premise once again shows how to uncompromisingly and unhesitatingly deal with a problem. Yet this doctrine can repeat the mistakes that were made in the fight against terrorism, and involve personnel, such as the armed forces, in dealing with problems for which they are not trained. What could be even more concerning is that once again such a posture on the problems may leads to dealing with said problems rashly. Such actions do not contemplate dialogue with other institutions or the participation of other actors. It is nevertheless considered a way of dealing with problems, yet does not aid in explaining how the problems will be resolved, and thus remains in the declarative.

5.2. Tolerance to corruption: does work, but steals

As had been observed, the candidates did not manifestly disagree with the idea that certain works could be carried out if it benefited the population, whilst hinting that it was not essential to follow the procedures, transparency, or efficiency in accounting for expenses. Regarding this, the 2014 Datum survey found that 41% of Lima's population believed that they would vote for a candidate who does work, but steals. Along the same lines, in the 2015 Proetica national survey¹⁶, 51% indicated that corrupt officials should only be punished if they do not do anything. Both surveys show little disagreement with this premise held by the Peruvian population, which therefore highlights a certain tolerance of corruption.

For Vivar (2020), there is a certain correlate when using the phrase "steals, but works" that stems from the transition process from Peru's hyperinflation (late 1980s) to the economic boom (early 2000s). During this period there was an effort to stabilize economic indicators that the population was content to enjoy. This led to a certain amount of corruption being tolerated if a certain stability was attained. The most worrying aspect for Vivar is that a society that forgets or leaves ethics aside is more prone to corruption, which can subsequently spread throughout society regardless of position, "from the circles of big business down to informal transport workers" (p. 213).

Although Tratemberg (2016) does not specify where this premise of tolerance comes from, the same believes it must be understood from the context of the population: one that has unsatisfied needs and expectations that someone will come to solve them. It thus does not matter that when certain works are done, there is some theft involved. The author, on the one hand, reinforces the state's inefficiency to solve the fundamental problems of the population (and to provide prevention and control mechanisms), and, on the other hand, the tolerance that the population may have.

Meléndez (2014), reflecting on this premise shown by the Datum survey, tries to identify where it is accentuated, and identifies that it is higher in socioeconomic levels D and E (50%), very similar to the general average in level C, and lower in levels A and B (30%). Meléndez states that this pragmatism can be understood in the lower levels due to poorer income levels and

¹⁶ For more details, see <https://www.dropbox.com/s/ba68wrn2y2f4s4m/292794637-Novena-Encuesta-nacional-sobre-percepciones-de-la-corrupcion-2015.pdf?dl=0>

informality, but does not manage to explain it for the higher levels. In this regard, we could indicate that although there are certain differences according to socioeconomic levels, tolerance of corruption traverses all socioeconomic levels.

Proetica (2019) indicates that tolerance to corruption is at a medium level and has increased from 65% in 2017 to 68% in 2019. Therefore, the population's tolerance to corruption is constant, and it is not surprising that, when electing a municipal authority, respect for the procedures and rules of contracting, or even ethics or transparency are taken into consideration. However, it is "permissible" that said authority is linked to corruption in order to ensure certain civil works. This normalization of practices is also noted by Vega and Elías (2020) when analyzing corruption in the districts of Lima Norte. They bring to light these normalized practices by municipal officials and citizens, which implies that the participation of authorities and civil servants is "tolerated" in land trafficking, as is the existence of middlemen to obtain certain municipal licenses.

However, what may be more serious is what Tratemberg (2016) mentions when pointing out that candidates and government officials are not perturbed by accusations of corruption, as they know they have the support of the population. In other words, the authorities are aware of what the population believes, and thus take advantage of this circumstance. Romero et al. (2021) assert that this phrase also implies, from a psychological aspect, the role that the citizen fulfills, where the same only does so as a spectator and avoids their responsibility to participate. As such, this situation could be the basis to continue voting for a candidate who steals, but who does work.

6. Conclusions

The issue of corruption in the analyzed candidates' government plans submitted to the National Jury of Elections is not salient. We do not refer only to the number of pages focusing on the issue (less than one page in the government plans submitted), but also to the lack of constructed logic, where one would expect to find the problem, its background, possible causes, consequences, and possible solutions. This is even more evident it comes to candidates seeking to occupy an important position such as the mayor of Lima. What the candidates stated remains declarative and poorly reasoned. Although corruption is perceived as one of the most pressing problems for the Lima's inhabitants, the candidates do not treat it as a priority issue. This situation erodes the importance of municipalities as an institution for citizens.

The candidates do manage to establish possible causes or consequences of corruption, however, not in any depth, and broadly without identifying specific participants, previous administrations or personnel (bureaucracy). The candidates do not attempt to clearly identify them, as they prefer to be declarative only or very superficially reason the issue. No indication is made of specific public policies to tackle corruption. However, we must stress that the public does not demand any further focus on the matter, nor any information on how the manifested proposals will be implemented. Therefore, to confront corruption citizen participation must increase, since, as we have seen, politicians will do only the minimum and reinforce the declarative.

The government plans do reveal certain recurrent latent discourses, such as considering the fight against corruption as a war. The foregoing demonstrates that the war premise has been in our imagination and that it has been able to transition, taking on another form, such as the firm hand premise. Said premise has thus been reconfigured, but it still maintains the idea that when confronting problems we must have be unhesitatingly firm. This situation also manifests in the little value attributed to the dialogue and that there may be different situations when contemplating a certain issue.

Likewise, the premise of “steals, but works” is reinforced due to Peruvian’s tolerance to corruption (and not only in Lima) that cuts across the various socioeconomic levels. The tolerance furthermore corroborates something perhaps more serious: that the authorities are aware of corruption, but do nothing to combat it. Rather, they use it because they foresee that certain corruption can be tolerated if certain works are facilitated or certain basic needs are met. Therefore, their aim is not to build institutions or instill trust in them, but rather to maintain the *status quo* for the candidates’ own benefit. The focus on corruption tends to center on serious economic issues, but in doing so, the impact it can also have on local institutions and on the population as a whole is often left aside.

After observing how the candidates for Lima’s municipal government address corruption, the lack of state capacity that Bertranou mentioned is evident. Not only should candidates communicate their plans, but how they will fully develop and implement the same in an institution, such as an autonomous municipal government. Again, the candidates confirm, as per Majone, that the discourse is solely declarative and poorly reasoned.

A kind of symbiosis is observed between what the political parties propose, which have their correlate in the declarative, and what the population demands, since no details are demanded. As such, the flashy or grandiloquent is better than stating the process and the measures for the plan’s implementation, which consequently questions the role we should have as citizens.

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