MEXICO'S DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT? EFFECTS OF FEAR AND CORRUPTION IN MEXICO: UPDATED

James Arthur Norris[A], Lola Orellano Norris[B]

A DEMOCRACIA DO MÉXICO ESTÁ AMEAÇADA? EFEITOS DO MEDO E DA CORRUPÇÃO NO MÉXICO: ATUALIZAÇÃO

RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo deste estudo é expor as atitudes do público no México em relação à percepção de sucesso ou fracasso da democracia no país e o possível apoio a alternativas autoritárias que possam ser percebidas como mais bem-sucedidas no fornecimento de justiça e segurança.

Estrutura Teórica: A nova democracia mexicana estagnou devido a graves e persistentes escândalos de corrupção e a uma crise de segurança e justiça avassaladora, agravada por uma explosão de violência associada ao crime organizado do narcotráfico. A situação é grave o suficiente para questionar a sobrevivência da democracia no México.

Projeto/Abordagem: Este documento apresenta e analisa dados dos Barômetros das Américas de 2006 a 2019 que abrangem o principal período de extrema insegurança no México.

[A] *Doctor of Philosophy. Department of Social Sciences, Texas A&M International University. Texas, USA.*
E-mail: jnorris@tamiu.edu Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7571-4811
[B] *Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies. Department of Humanities, Texas A&M International University. Texas, USA.*
E-mail: lonorris@tamiu.edu Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6483-1845

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. |Miami, v. 9 | n. 4| p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024.

1

Conclusões: O artigo confirma que os mexicanos estão decepcionados com a forma como a democracia funciona no México. A frustração deles é motivada por vários fatores: percepções de corrupção política, preocupações com a segurança do país e sua situação econômica. As preocupações mais importantes estão relacionadas a políticos corruptos e à segurança. Uma proporção substancial do público mexicano está considerando trocar a democracia pela segurança.

Implicações Sociais, Práticas e de Pesquisa: Um estudo mais aprofundado deve examinar se há apoio à repressão extrajudicial do crime, se o apoio aumentou talvez por frustração e a complexa relação que os mexicanos têm com a percepção generalizada de que tanto o sistema político quanto o sistema judiciário são irrevogavelmente corruptos.

Originalidade/valor: A questão da sobrevivência da democracia nascente é de grande interesse na política comparada e nos estudos latino-americanos. A questão mais ampla é como ajudar as jovens democracias a se tornarem democracias saudáveis.

Palavras-chave: México, Corrupção, Medo do Crime, Democratização, Tráfico de Drogas, Homicídio.

¿LA DEMOCRACIA MEXICANA AMENAZADA? EFECTOS DEL MIEDO Y LA CORRUPCIÓN EN MÉXICO: ACTUALIZACIÓN

RESUMEN

Propósito: El propósito de este estudio es exponer las actitudes del público en México hacia la percepción del éxito o fracaso de la democracia en el país, y el posible apoyo a alternativas autoritarias que pudieran percibirse como más exitosas en la impartición de justicia y seguridad.

Marco Teórico: La nueva democracia mexicana se ha estancado debido a graves y persistentes escándalos de corrupción y a una abrumadora crisis de seguridad y justicia, agravada por una explosión de violencia asociada al crimen organizado del narcotráfico. La situación es lo suficientemente grave como para cuestionar la supervivencia de la democracia en México.

Diseño/Enfoque: Este trabajo presenta y analiza datos de los Barómetros de las Américas de 2006 - 2019 que cubren el principal periodo de inseguridad extrema en México.

Hallazgos: El artículo confirma que los mexicanos están decepcionados con la forma en que funciona la democracia en México. Su frustración es impulsada por varios factores: percepciones de corrupción política, preocupaciones por la seguridad del país y su situación económica. Las preocupaciones más destacadas tienen que ver con los políticos corruptos y la seguridad. Una proporción sustancial de la población mexicana está considerando cambiar democracia por seguridad.

Implicaciones Sociales, Prácticas y de Investigación: Estudios posteriores deberían examinar si existe apoyo a la represión extralegal del crimen, si el apoyo ha aumentado quizá por frustración, y la compleja relación que los mexicanos tienen con la percepción generalizada de que tanto el sistema político como el de justicia son irremediablemente corruptos.

Originalidad/Valor: La cuestión de la supervivencia de la democracia naciente es de gran interés en la política comparada y en los estudios latinoamericanos. La cuestión más amplia es cómo ayudar a las democracias nacientes a madurar hasta convertirse en democracias sanas.

Palabras clave: México, Corrupción, Miedo al Crimen, Democratización, Narcotráfico, Homicidio.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the past sixteen years the consolidation or habituation (Rustow, 1970) of Mexico's new democracy has stalled in the face of severe and persistent corruption scandals and an overwhelming security and justice crisis, aggravated by an explosion of violence associated with narcotics trafficking organized crime in the North, Pacific Coast, and Gulf Coast regions. The situation is serious enough to question the survival of democracy in Mexico. One signal that democracy may not thrive in Mexico is Freedom House downgrading Mexico in 2011 from

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

2

"free" to "partly free" (Puddington, 2011). In addition, Freedom House's press freedom index from 2016 through 2019 reports that Mexico's press freedom status was "not free" (Freedom House, 2019). Nearly every day U.S. and Mexican newspapers report another tragedy and another atrocity. The Mexican government has estimated 24,500 intentional homicides in 2019 (Esposito, 2020) and 154,557 between 2010 and 2016 (Angel et al., 2019). Furthermore, in early January 2020 the Mexican government reported that since 2006 over 61,000 Mexicans have gone missing (New Data, Mexico News Daily, 2020). In Nuevo Laredo as recently as December 2019 - January 2020 shootouts between suspected drug cartel members and the military were still breaking out (Rodriguez, 2020). The violence and apparent inability of the authorities to fully exercise control begs the question: can Mexican democracy survive? This article examines Mexican public opinion using LAPOP data sets of 2004 through 2019 [the survey was conducted every two years] concerning crime, fear of crime, and perceived corruption to determine if the crime wave and obvious insecurity have seriously damaged democracy's chances for survival in Mexico.

Figure 1

Homicides in Mexico 2004 - 2018
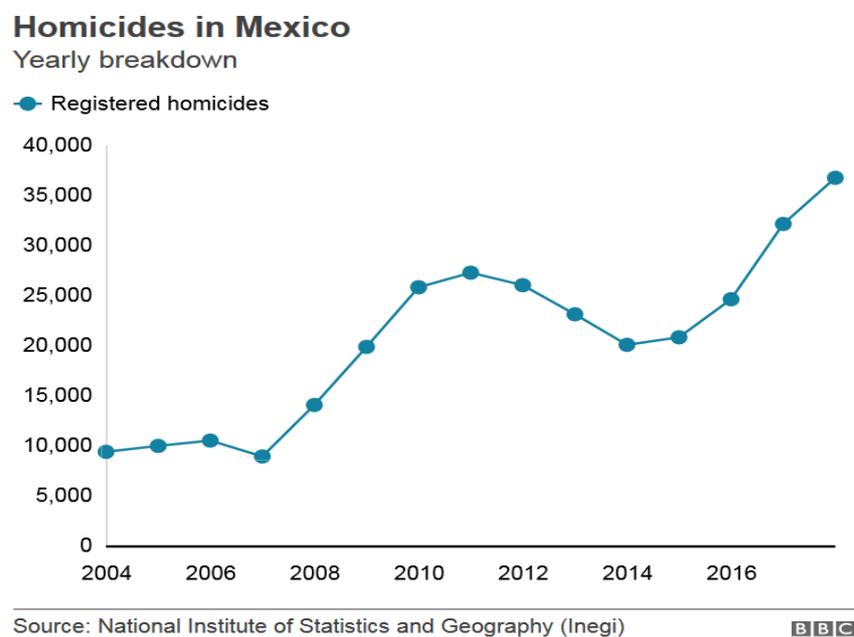
Source: BBC News Web Page 18 February 2020, How Dangerous is México? *www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-50315470*?

Democratic transitions have been reversed, raising concerns for the future of Mexican democracy. Huntington (1991) notes that democratic reversal can be the result of the decline of

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

3

the legitimacy of democracy through a sustained inability to provide prosperity, equity, justice, and domestic order. Most would point out that to provide prosperity, justice, and order is exactly what legitimate government is about, but the failure to provide these is exactly what has been going on in Mexico. Moreover, the literature (see, for example Rustow, 1970) indicates that new democracies are especially vulnerable to democratic reversal. Milan Svolik (2013) explains:

> When a new democracy falls into the trap of pessimistic expectations, a critical mass of the public loses such "high enough esteem" for democracy and in turn fails to restrain a leader or group with authoritarian aspirations. The public's willingness to check transgressions against democracy erodes as mass disillusionment with government performance under democracy turns into indifference to alternative forms of government (p. 688).

Hence, democracies that are ineffective may relapse into authoritarian rule. For Mexico, these concerns are especially salient since Mexico has little experience with democracy, having been under Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) hegemony for 70 years. Mexico's democracy is young and, based upon Svolik (2013) and Rustow (1970), within the window of vulnerability. Moreover, Mexico's contemporary democratic experiment has been met with disappointment. Initially, the Vicente Fox presidency (2000-2006) was well celebrated as the embodiment of the new Mexican democracy. Nevertheless, by the end of President Fox's *sexenio,*[C] the performance of President Fox and the performance of the president's party, the National Action Party [PAN], were all disappointing compared to what the people had expected (Camp, 2009). By 2006 fifty-four percent of Mexicans who voted for Fox in 2000 were dissatisfied with not just the PAN, but with democracy itself (Camp, 2009). The Fox administration promised, "to stamp out corruption, foster economic growth and aid impoverished Mexicans, while at the same time promoting representative democracy" (Edmonds-Poli, 2006), but its efforts were incomplete. Instead, after some initial success, President Fox seemed overwhelmed in office; he became the reluctant president, avoiding tough choices and appearing hesitant (Loaeza, 2006, p. 29). Moreover, the next PAN president, President Calderón, was so unpopular by the end of 2012 that he was disinvited from making his end-of-term State of the Union speech (Ernesto Núñez, 2012). In the 2013 *Latinobarómetro* Mexico scores the lowest of all Latin American states on the question "Democracy is preferable to any other type of government," with only 37 percent responding positively (Latinobarómetro 2013). More recently, the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto also proved a great disappointment

---

[C] Constitutionally mandated single six-year term of office.

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

4

to Mexicans (Bravo Regidor & Iber, 2018). This is well demonstrated by the results of the 2016 election where the PRI candidate ended up in a distant third place. In the 2019-2020 LAPOP AmericasBarometer 53.6 percent of Mexicans said they were dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Mexico.

2 CRIME AND DEMOCRACY

Crime has Mexicans living under conditions of uncertainty and fear. Out of fear for crime and criminals, more than half of Mexicans have modified their daily activities and consider that their quality of life has been negatively affected (Pérez Correa, 2007). In a 2012 survey nationally just over 35 percent report out of fear they have changed where they shop, and 15 percent have moved house. In the North, 46 percent have changed where they shop, and just over 26 percent have moved. The World Values Survey 2012 data show that for fear of crime, 73 percent carry very little cash on their person, 67.1 percent avoid going out at night, and 41.4 percent claimed they felt unsafe from crime even in their own homes. Fear of crime is as politically salient as actual crime because ultimately fear drives political attitudes and behaviors (Kilburn et al., 2013, pp. 30-33). Political preferences are products of subjective perceptions such as the fear of crime (Dammert and Malone, 2006). Most crime in Mexico goes unreported because Mexicans believe reporting crime does no good or it will cause them unending frustration with red tape (Pérez Correa, 2007). In other cases, reporting a crime can have implications that are even more dangerous if the police are part of or have been infiltrated by criminal elements. In addition, there is a growing sense that the police are incompetent to stop crime (Barracca, 2004, p. 1482). Indeed, just over 95 percent of crime in Mexico goes unsolved (Pérez Correa, 2007, p. 15). In Chihuahua, for example, for 2010 only 1.1 percent of murders were successfully prosecuted; nationally it was 6.3 percent (*México Evalúa*, 2012). *Animal Político* points out that that police training is "practically nonexistent,' and "almost 95 percent of municipalities lack a police force sufficiently trained to even secure a crime scene" (Angel & Rea, 2019).

Police incompetence or inadequacy is not the only barrier to solving Mexico's crime issue. There is growing evidence and public realization that part of the problem is police corruption and police involvement in crime. "Police criminal activity runs the range from taking small bribes to burglary, to involvement in drug trafficking, and the operation of protection rackets and kidnapping rings" (Barracca, 2007, p. 1482). Pérez Correa (2007) adds that based

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

5

on the 2004 *Latinobarómetro* survey, 65% of Mexicans reported "a lot" or "quite a lot" of probabilities for police to be bribed, and similarly, 58% replied that there were "a lot" or "quite a lot" of probabilities of bribing a judge (p. 15). Police corruption was thought to be so pervasive in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, that all 700 police officers were fired in 2005 (Lacy, 2009). Casteñeda (2010) asserts that the local (municipal) police cannot fight the drug cartels because they are often part of the drug cartels. Moreover, the Mexican Senate reports that 195 municipalities (8 percent) were under the control of organized crime and another 63 percent somewhat under the influence of organized crime in 2010 (Beittel, 2018, p. 45). As Ruiz Harrell (2007) points out: "The trouble is this is not a minor problem: without the trust of the people they claim to serve, police and prosecutors are doomed to ineffectiveness" (p. E143).

3 CORRUPTION AND DEMOCRACY IN MEXICO

Corruption is illegal or legal, but unethical, behavior by public officials manipulating the government for their own gain (Norris, J., 2019). Corruption nearly always involves behaviors harmful to the public interest. "[C]orruption constitutes a violation of the unwritten contract between citizen and public official" (Canche & Allison, 2005, p. 92). Corruption is rampant in Mexico, and Mexico is also both a newly democratic country and a rapidly developing country. Bailey and Paras (2006) indicate that one-third of Mexicans identified corruption as Mexico's most important problem. Paradoxically, in 2002 after the widely perceived as corrupt PRI (in office 1929-2000) was booted out of office, 47 percent thought corruption was getting worse, while 58 percent thought the new Fox administration (PAN) was less corrupt than the previous administrations. The average *mordida* (small bribe, literal translation: "little bite") was ten dollars; the total annual cost was over 1 billion dollars for 2001(Bailey and Parras, p. 65), and the average Mexican spent $394 per year paying *mordidas* (Bailey & Parras, p. 75). The 2010 AmericasBarometer survey of Mexico reports that 24.8 percent of Mexican claim they have been solicited by police to pay a *mordida;* this is the highest rate in all of Latin America. Corruption in government, but especially in the police creates an unhealthy cycle that undermines confidence in justice and in the legitimacy of the state. Punch (2000) describes the especially devastating effect of police corruption, "Police officers are the state made flesh. If they are corrupt, and if citizens lose confidence in them, then this undermines the legitimacy of the state" (p. 322).

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

6

Unfortunately, being a new democracy may mean that corruption has increased or, at least, appears to be a more serious problem above and beyond that experienced under PRI control. There are several possible explanations for amplified perceptions of corruption among the public. First, prior to Mexico's democratic opening, when PRI fortunes were in the decline, keeping the problem hidden was a high priority because exposing the breadth and depth of corruption would further destabilize the party's overall legitimacy and electability (Davis, 2006, p. 64). Second, rent-seeking government officials may be taking advantage of both the uncertainty and chaos of transition, grasping their last opportunities to extract payments before democracy demands transparency and honesty. Third, perceptions that corruption, criminality, and violence may be on the rise, due to the more competitive, independent, and active media's published accounts and exposes of public corruption (Lawson, 2002). Pipa Norris (2011) has shown that the negative tone of news coverage affects satisfaction with the government. Additionally, during the PRI era all the major media outlets served the PRI, but now the major media are free to expose scandal and corruption, and they are doing just this (O'Neill, 2013). In addition, new civil society groups against corruption have emerged. A fourth explanation is that a temporary increase in corruption is a natural consequence of political modernization (Huntington, 1968). Last, in a newly emerging democracy corruption scandals may be positive signs that citizen have become are aware of public corruption and now recognize that norms of fair dealing and competent administration exist and that can be violated (Rose-Ackerman, 1997).

4 DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC STRESS

Evaluations of the economy are very important to appraisals of the effectiveness and subsequent breakdown of democratic governance (O'Donnell, 1973; Wallerstein, 1980; Przeworski, 1991; Gasiorowski, 1995; Svolik, 1995). In addition, a huge body of work (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1981; Lewis-Beck, 1988; Norpoth, 1996; Wagner et al., 2009) supports the claim that economics has a strong and systematic impact on elections and individual-level political evaluations. Economic evaluations in Mexico seem likely to affect democratic legitimacy through attitudes toward the institutions of democracy. Furthermore, the old PRI regime claimed "revolutionary" legitimacy from promises to eliminate economic inequality and injustice (Kelsner, 2005). Therefore, new economic injustices such as unemployment and economic inequality may have serious consequences for the legitimacy of new democracies and even for democracy itself. Moreover, during the *sexenio* of President Enrique Peña Nieto per capita wealth

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

7

in Mexico declined by \$5,000 to \$20,620 per adult (Tourliere, 2018). Haggard and Kaufman (1995) argue that economic crises are a main force that undermines agreements between the regime and leaders of key groups in society. If the government fails to respond or is unable to respond to economic crises, competing social and economic interests scramble for a new bargain in their favor, undermining the stability of democracy.

There is ample evidence that narco trafficker violence negatively impacts local economies in affected regions. It has been estimated that some 230,000 people fled Cuidad Juaréz, one of the most violent border cities, from 2006 to 2009 and 430,000 fled the Northern states from 2005 to 2010 (Altuesta and Paredes. 2015, p. 482). It is estimated that in the northern border city of Nuevo Laredo in 2006 alone 700 businesses closed and in *Cuidad Juárez* from 2007 to 2010 about 10,000 businesses closed down (Rios Contreras, 2014, p. 209). In Nuevo Laredo, the violence led to a substantial drop in tourism, the heart of that city's economy (Kilburn, San Miguel, and Kwak, 2013, p. 33). This has meant "economic losses of about \$4.3 billion annually" for the Mexican economy (Rios Contreras, 2008, p. 1). One estimate made even before the drug trafficker violence erupted supposes that the full cost of violence in Mexico may be as high as 12 percent of GDP (Robles, Magaloni, and Calderón, 2013, p. 8). A similar work concludes that drug trafficker violence causes negative growth rates of between 14 and 11 percent annually in the states most affected by the violence (Pan, Widner, and Enomoto, 2012).

5 DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Democratic consolidation is said to be achieved once "democracy becomes the only game in town when all actors are habituated to the fact that political conflict will be resolved according to accepted norms and violations of these norms are likely to be both ineffective and costly" (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 5). Gunther, Puhle, and Diamondouros (1995) add: "We consider a democratic regime to be consolidated when all politically significant groups regard its key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation and adhere to democratic rules of the game" (p. 7). Przeworski (1991, p. 26) agrees, asserting that democracy is consolidated when it becomes self-enforcing.

Larry Diamond (1996) emphasizes behavioral and attitudinal criteria. The idea is that attitudes direct behavior. Adherence to the rule of law is one of several behaviors that is observed in consolidated democracies. Hence, a critical dimension is attitudinal. Ordinary citizens must also be "habituated" to democratic procedures and expectations before democracy

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

8

can be considered consolidated (Przeworski, 1991). It follows that if the law is not enforced, if corrupt practices thwart justice, and/or if forces such as organized crime exercise overwhelming coercive force, citizens cannot habituate to democratic norms. Once organized crime grows into so big a problem that it undermines government monopoly on coercive force, then the issue is no longer just a question of law and order but of national security (Allim and Siebert, 2003, p. 4). "Democracy fails once it fails to deliver security. And it fails when the second key public good, justice, is denied, which is the case in a corrupt justice system" (Norris, J., 2019, p. 116).

6 DATA AND METHOD

This paper uses data from the AmericasBarometers of 2006 - 2019 that cover the main period of extreme insecurity in Mexico. These were nationwide surveys conducted every two years with approximately 1500 respondents each time.

7 EVIDENCE: CRIME AND FEAR OF CRIME

The purpose of this paper is not to document the increase in crime and the increased salience of corruption, yet these next two sections offer evidence that both these institutional defects are very important in the thoughts of Mexicans. Therefore, we present some of the survey evidence of the scope of the predicaments facing Mexico. The data shown in Figure 2 indicate that crime has become increasingly the most salient problem in Mexico. Whereas in 2004 about 10.5 percent cited crime, drug trafficking, or lack of security as the number one problem facing Mexico, by the 2008 survey these were the major concerns of 27.7 percent. Six years later, in the 2014 survey 34.4 percent identified crime, drug trafficking, or lack of security as the number one problem facing Mexico. This decreased in the 2016 survey, but by 2018 – 2019, a whopping 48.4 percent said these were the most important problems facing the country. Normally, respondents in countries across the world identify economic problems or unemployment as the most serious problem facing their country, as Mexicans did in 2004. About 25 percent cited unemployment, about 16 percent economic problems, and about 16 percent poverty as the most important problems facing Mexico in 2004.

Furthermore, respondents have become increasingly concerned that crime and security in Mexico have become so advanced that, by often overwhelming majorities, Mexicans believe that the situation is very much a threat to the future of the country. Figure 3 tracks responses for the

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

9

whole country. In 2004 a bare majority of Mexicans believed the threat so important that is was a threat to Mexico's future, and by the 2010 survey this has increased to 68.5 percent. Surprisingly and unfortunately, the surveys after 2010 do not ask the same question. However, fortunately, the 2018 - 2019 survey asks a question that captures in some ways a similar signal of the deterioration of the conditions of security and safety in the thoughts of Mexicans. The 2018 - 2019 survey asked respondents to rate the perceived safety/security of their own neighborhood. This is shown in Table 1. Of the almost 1553 respondents, a majority of 864 or 55.6 percent answered that the felt their own neighborhoods were unsafe. Only 44.4 percent thought conditions very safe or somewhat safe.

Figure 2

Mexico. Percent choosing crime, narco trafficking, or lack of security as the most serious problem
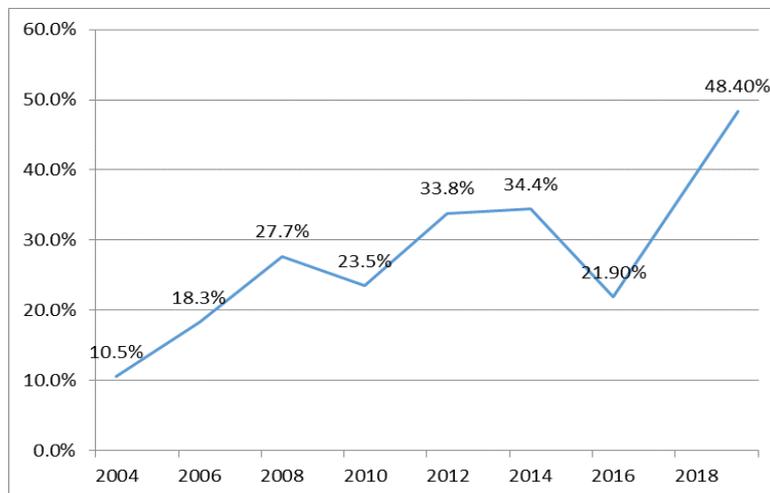
Source: Author calculations LAPOP AmericasBarometer Mexico data. The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), www.LapopSurveys.org.

Figure 3

Mexico. Percent stating current level of crime is very much a threat to the future of the country
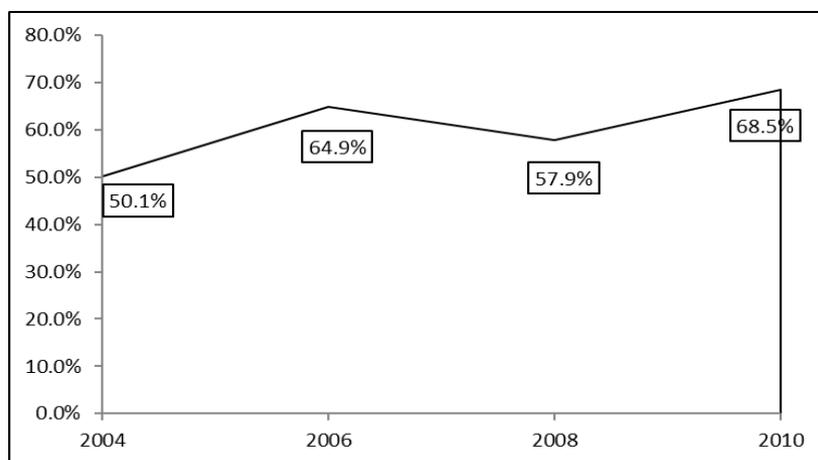
Source: Author calculations LAPOP AmericasBarometer Mexico data 2004 - 2010. The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), www.LapopSurveys.org

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

10

Table 1

2018 -2019 Perception of How Safe is Your Neighborhood

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Safe	202	12.8	13.0	13.0
Somewhat Safe	487	30.8	31.4	44.4
Somewhat Unsafe	505	32.0	32.5	76.9
Very Unsafe	369	22.7	23.1	100
Missing	27	1.7		
Total	1580	100		

Source: Author calculations LAPOP 2018 - 2019 AmericasBarometer Mexico data. The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), *www.LapopSurveys.org*.

8 EVIDENCE: CORRUPTION

In the 2018 – 2019 AmericasBarometer 72.5 percent of Mexicans perceived that corruption among public officials is either very common or common. Among Latin American countries Mexico has the highest rates of reported bribe solicitation. Seventy-three percent of those surveyed in 2018 reported having been solicited for a bribe by police (see Figure 4 for the same responses for the other survey years). Similarly, 16.9 percent admitted that bribe paying can be justified as necessary. This is down from the few previous surveys. In addition, based upon the 2012 survey [this question was not included in the later surveys] 57 percent believe that the government does not do very much to fight corruption, but at the same time about 26 percent think the government does make significant efforts to thwart corruption; the remaining 18 percent are right in the middle. Nevertheless, the literature points out that negative evaluations concerning corruption are not likely to be shared by political supporters of the current government (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003; Manzetti and Wilson, 2009). In the 2018-19 survey about 80 percent asserted that half or more than half of all politicians are corrupt. Moreover, Mexican authorities and politicians have long used the façade of official loathing of corruption by sponsoring anti-corruption campaigns that attack a few symbolic scapegoats. Because governments can claim to have taken positive measures against corruption, a significant enough proportion of the public are misled into believing officials and government are indeed successful and doing their best to fight corruption. This is ironic because they are often the cause and instigators of corruption.

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

11

Figure 4

Percent Claiming Police Solicited a Bribe
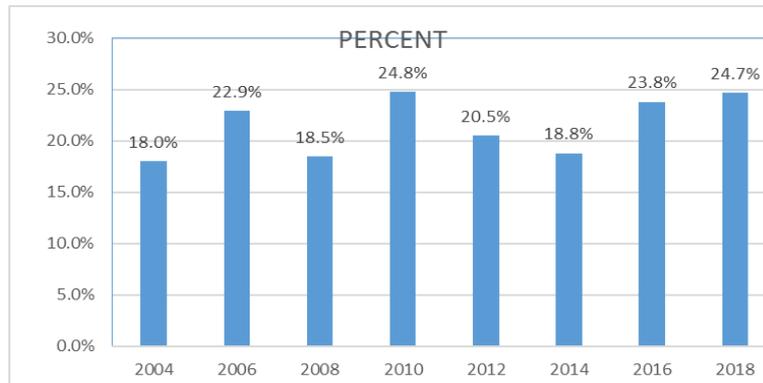
Source: Author calculations LAPOP data AmericasBarometer Mexico data. The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), www.LapopSurveys.org.

9 VARIABLES

The dependent variable is Satisfaction with Democracy, which is the most widely used indicator of support for democracy (Linde and Ekman, 2003). As a measure, it indicates support for or lack of support for the way democracy operates in practice in a country according to its citizens, without needing an exact definition of democracy. This is useful because different societies and cultures have different ideas about the purpose of democracy. In much of Latin America and Mexico democracy is thought to embrace the idea of equality more than the concepts of freedom or liberty. Respondents supply their own understanding of the complex concept, "democracy." In the 2018-19 survey, shown in Table 2 below, most Mexicans are not satisfied with the way democracy works in Mexico.

The independent variables are divided into several broad categories that reflect and capture aspects of the major issues of crime, corruption, and economic evaluations. In addition, still tapping the above ideas, but in a different way, an additional independent variable explores the concession that corruption is an accepted part of life in Mexico. This variable explores the dimension of the perception of corruption caused by attitude changes brought by democratization towards realizations that corruption is becoming less acceptable than in the past (Rose-Ackerman, 1997). Another measures the possible effects of a less constrained mass media more free to report corruption scandals and crime, where the rising consumption of mass media may be a possible explanation either for knowledge of higher levels of crime and violence, and/or awareness of corruption and scandals. Lastly, support for military intervention

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

12

into the drug war is the last essential independent variable. Demographic control variables are also included: education, gender, age, and family income.

Table 2

Frequency Table of Satisfaction With the Way Democracy Works in Mexico

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	190	12.7	12.7
Dissatisfied	613	40.9	53.6
Satisfied	617	41.2	94.9
Very Satisfied	77	5.1	100.0
	1497	100.0	
Missing	61		

Source: Author calculations LAPOP data AmericasBarometer Mexico 2018-2019 data. The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), www.LapopSurveys.org.

10 FINDINGS

The regression, shown in Table 3, tests the hypotheses that corruption, crime, and deteriorating security due to the drug war damages the reputation of Mexico's new democracy; each of these appears to contribute to dissatisfaction with the way democracy works (henceforth, satisfaction with democracy) in Mexico. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that among the above concerns the perception that their own neighborhood is unsafe is the strongest contributor to dissatisfaction with democracy [β = -.113]. However, nearly of equal power [β = -.108] is the perception that most politicians are corrupt. As predicted, perceptions that most politicians are corrupt is significant and does sour Mexican satisfaction with democracy. In addition, safety and security also play a negative role in assessments of democracy in Mexico. The independent variables associated with crime and insecurity are both significant. Having been a crime victim in the last year is significant and correctly predicts dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in Mexico. It asserts the smallest relative effect on the dependent variable [β= -.079], but crime victims are 13 percent less satisfied with how democracy in Mexico functions. Assessments of neighborhood safety also affect satisfaction with democracy as expected. Perceptions that their neighborhood is unsafe led to declining satisfaction with democracy. Moreover, this effect is robust, with a nine percent decline in satisfaction with Mexican democracy for each of the four values on the independent variable. Surprisingly, sociotropic [national] economic evaluations of the economy are not significant,[D] but idiographic [individual] evaluations of one's own economic success are significant and in the

---

[D] Surprising regarding the findings of Norris, J. (2019), which used the LAPOP data from 2016- 2017 in its analysis. In this earlier analysis, the sociotropic economic variable was significant and the idiographic economic variable was not significant.

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

13

correct direction. The more favorably respondents perceive their own economic situation, the more favorably they evaluate Mexico's democracy, and the opposite. For each positive step on the three-value individual economic evaluation, respondents are about 10 percent more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works in Mexico. Additionally, trust in the armed forces, which the government has been using to fight the drug cartels, means greater satisfaction with democracy. Moreover, this effect is the strongest of all [β = .156]. Perhaps, unexpectedly, more education means dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in Mexico. The effect is small, minus 1.2 percent support for each additional year of education, but this translates to minus 19 percent support for Mexican democracy for university graduates and minus 12 percent for secondary school [equivalent] graduates. News consumption was not significant. The data set also includes possible variables that superficially examine internet, Facebook, Twitter (currently known as X), and WhatsApp usage, as well; these may be more useful in gauging exposure to the "news," for similar future projects. Furthermore, two of these, Facebook and WhatsApp, produce weak, but significant correlations with the dependent variable.

Table 3

OLS Regression on Satisfaction With the Way Democracy Works In Mexico, 2018

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.445***	.207		16.666	*.000*
Police Bribe Solicited (I)	-.040	.050		-.813	*.417*
Politicians Corrupt (S)	-.126***	.031	-.108	-4.100	*.000*
Crime Victim in Last Year (I)	-.130**	.045	-.079	-2.912	*.004*
Neighborhood Safety (S)	-.090***	.022	.113	*-4.172*	*.000*
Economy Idiographic	.104**	.035	.092	*-3.005*	*.003*
Economy Sociotropic	.039	.032		*-1.207*	*.405*
Sometimes Paying a Bribe is Just?	-.034	.054		*-.622*	*.534*
News Consumption	-.027	.020		*-1.349*	*.178*
Trust Armed Forces	.066***	.012	.156	5.771	.000
Education	-.012*	.006	-.071	-2.308	.021
Gender	.041	.043		.334	.738
Age	.001	.001		.879	.380
Income	-.003	.005		-.646	.519

R = .334
Adj R^2 = .103
N = 1334

* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.01$
*** $p < 0.001$
Source: Author calculations 2018-19 LAPOP data AmericasBarometer Mexico data. The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), www.LapopSurveys.org.

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

14

11 CONCLUSIONS

Mexicans are disappointed with the way democracy works in Mexico. Seventy-three percent are dissatisfied with Mexico's democracy. Their dissatisfaction is driven by several factors: by perceptions of political corruption, by concerns for the country's safety and security, and by their economic situation. The dependent variable is based upon perceptions of regime performance and not on abstract ideas and conceptualizations of the meaning of democracy (Linde & Ekman, 2003). Moreover, the public's most salient concerns have to do with corrupt politicians and security. Thus far, regime performance has been found wanting. Furthermore, Mexicans do strongly trust the military, which the government has been using to help fight the drug cartel war, only 35.3 percent score neutral or negative on this variable, and this lends strong support to satisfaction with the way democracy is working in Mexico. Therefore, if the military effort is perceived as successful or, at least, as having some success in curtailing the violence, Mexican appraisals of the success of their new democracy will rise. However, Casteñeda (2010) warns that the military solution will fail in the long term, and military confrontations continue thirteen years after the beginning of the military crackdown (Rodriguez, 2020). It seems the more the government confronts the cartels, the more brutal the retaliations (Norris, 2019).

Mexico's democracy still stands on an unstable foundation. In 2014, 58 percent of Mexicans could conceive of the possibility of a military coup d'état if crime is too high or if there is too much corruption. In the 2018-19 survey, this has declined to between 44 and 42 percent respectively. Likely, this is a sign of hope for the success of the new administration. Elections occurred a few months prior to the survey with a resounding majority victory for Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and his political party, the National Regeneration Movement, *MORENA*. Still, it does appear that a substantial proportion of the Mexican public is at least considering trading democracy for security. Further study should examine if there exists support for extra-legal suppression of crime (Norris, J., 2016), if support has increased perhaps out of frustration, and the complex relationship Mexicans have with their widespread perception that both the political system and the justice system is irrevocably corrupt. Mexico seemed poised to slip into mass disillusionment with democracy, and possibly indifference to democracy's survival in favor of increased security based upon an earlier article (Norris, 2019). Mexico has suffered policy failure after policy failure since 1994 through 2019. Svolik's (2013) "cycle of negative reinforcement" invites pessimism towards democracy and at some point, the

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

15

public's pessimism becomes the self-reinforcing "trap of pessimistic expectations" (p. 699). Democracy is then vulnerable to subversion. Mexico has reached this point. Moreover, the 2018 election results point to a profound dissatisfaction with corrupt politics in Mexico, but with a glimmer of hope. The public hopes and expects that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and *MORENA* will turn things around and lift Mexico out of this seeming "trap of pessimistic expectations." "AMLO has worked hard to maintain an image of pure, moral opposition to this kind of dishonest government—in spite of the corruption scandals roiling some of his associates" (Bravo Regidor & Iber, 2019). However, thus far we have not seen a significant improvement in the security situation and in some cases a marked deterioration, such as the October 2019 debacle in Culiacán (Johnson, 2019), and the November 2019 ambush in Sonora that killed nine U.S. citizens, six of them children (Aguilera & Carlisle, 2019).

REFERENCES

Aguilera, J., & Carlisle, M. (2019, November 5). 9 U.S. citizens, including 6 children, were killed in an ambush in Mexico. Here's what we know so far. *Time*. Retrieved February 20, 2021, from https://time.com/5718325/nine-united-states-citizens-killed-mexico/

Allum, F., & Siebert, R. (2003). Organized Crime: a Threat to Democracy. In F. Allum & R. Siebert (Eds.), *Organized Crime and the Challenge to Democracy* (pp. 1–21). Abbington, UK: Routledge.

Anderson, C. J., & Tverdova, Y. V. (2003). Corruption, Political Allegiances, and Attitudes Toward Government in Contemporary Democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, *47*(1), 91–109.

Angel, A., Martinez, P., & Rea, D. (2019, January 2). Solving Mexico Homicide Backlog Could Take 124 Years. In *insightcrime.com*. InSight Crime. Retrieved January 24, 2021, from https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/solving-mexico-homicide-backlog-could-take-124-years/

Atuesta, L. H., & Paredes, D. (2015). Do Mexicans flee from violence? The effects of drug-related violence on migration decisions in Mexico. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *42*(3), 480–502.

Bailey, J., & Paras, P. (2006). Perceptions and Attitudes about Corruption and Democracy in Mexico. Mexican Studies*/Estudios Mexicanos*, *22*(1), 57–82. https://doi.org/10.1525/msem.2006.22.1.57

Barracca, S. (2004). Is Mexican democracy consolidated? *Third World Quarterly*, *25*(8), 1469-1485.

Beittel, J. S. (2018). Mexico: Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations the Violence. In Congressional Research Service. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. Retrieved January 12, 2021, from http://www.crs.gov

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

16

Bravo Regidor, & Iber, P. (2018). A New Hope for Mexico? Dissent. https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/mexico-elections-andres-manuel-lopez-obrador-amlo.

Camp, R. A. (2009). Democracy Redux? Mexico's Voters and the 2006 Presidential Race. In Dominguez, J. I., Lawson, C., and Moreno, A. (Eds.). *Consolidating Mexico's Democracy; the 2006 Presidential Campaign in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 29-49). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Canache, D., & Allison, M. E. (2005). Perceptions of Political Corruption in Latin American Democracies. *Latin American Politics & Amp; Society*, *47*(3), 91–111. https://doi.org/10.1353/lap.2005.0031

Casteñeda, J. (2010). Mexico's Failed Drug War. *Economic Development Bulletin*, (13). Cato Institute. Retrieved January 12, 2021, from http://www.cato.org/publications/economic-development-bulletin/mexicos-failed-drug-war

Contreras, V. R. (2008). *Evaluating the economic impact of Mexico's drug trafficking industry*. Paper Presented at the Graduate Students Political Economy Workshop, Harvard University, Spring.

Contreras, V. R. (2014). The Role of Drug-Related Violence and Extortion in Promoting Mexican Migration: Unexpected Consequences of a Drug War. *Latin American Research Review*, *49*(3), 199–217.

Corchado, A. (2013). *Midnight in Mexico: A Reporters Journey Through a County's Descent into Darkness*. Penguin.

Davis, D. E. (2006). Undermining the Rule of Law: Democratization and the Dark Side of Police Reform in Mexico. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *48*(1), 55–86.

Diamond, L. J. (1996). Is the Third Wave Over? *Journal of Democracy*, *7*(3), 20–37.

Edmonds-Poli, E. (2006). Decentralization under the Fox Administration: Progress or Stagnation? *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, *22*(2), 387–416.

Ernesto Núñez, A. (2012). *Crónica de un sexenio fallido*. GRIJALBO.

Esposito, A. (2020). Murders in Mexico hit record as Lopez Obrador seeks justice system Reform. *Rueters.Com*. Retrieved January 30, 2021, from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-violence-murders/murders-in-mexico-hit-record-as-lopez-obrador-seeks-justice-system-reform-idUSKBN1ZK07C

Dammert, L., & Malone, M. F. T. (2006). Does It Take a Village? Policing Strategies and Fear of Crime in Latin America. *Latin American Politics &Amp; Society*, *48*(4), 27–51. Retrieved January 14, 2021, from https://doi.org/10.1353/lap.2006.0043

Freedom House. (2019). *Freedom in the World 2019, Mexico*. Retrieved January 18,2021 from https://freedomhouse.org/country/mexico/freedom-world/2019

Gasiorowski, M. J. (1995). Economic Crisis and Political Regime Change: An Event History Analysis. *American Political Science Review*, *89*(4), 882–897.

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

17

Gunther, R., Pruhle, H., Diamandouros, P. N., (1995). Introduction. In R. Gunther, P. N. Diamandouros & H. Pruhle (Eds.). *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 1-32). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Haggard, S., & Kaufman, R. R. (1995). The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

How Dangerous is Mexico? (2020, February 18). *BBC News*. Retrieved March 5, 2021, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-50315470

Huntington, S. P. (1970). *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Huntington, S. P. (1991).. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Indicadores de Víctimas Visibles e Invisibles de Homicidio. (2012). *México Evalúa, Centro De Análisis Políticas Públicas*. Retrieved January 21, 2021, from http://www.mexico evalua.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MEX-EVA_INDX_IVVI-HLOW.pdf

Johnson, P. L. (2019, November). Revisiting the Battle of Culiacán. NACLA. https://nacla.org/news/2019/11/22/culiacan-chapo-mexico-drug-violence

Kilburn, J., San Miguel, C., & Kwak, D. H. (2013). Is fear of crime splitting the sister cities? The case of Los Dos Laredos. *Cities*, *34*, 30–36. Retrieved March 3, 2021, from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2012.11.003

Kinder, D. R., & Kiewiet, D. R. (1981). Sociotropic Politics: The American Case. *British Journal of Political Science*, *11*(2), 129–161. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123400002544

Klesner, J. L. (2005). Electoral Competition and the New Party System in Mexico. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *47*(02), 103–142.

Lacy, M. (2009, June 13). *In Mexican City, Drug War Ills Slip Into Shadows*. New York Times. Retrieved January 8, 2021, from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/13/world/americas/13laredo.html

Latinobarómetro. (2013). http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp

Lawson, C. (2002). *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of the Free Press in Mexico*. Berkeley, CA: Univ of California Press.

Lewis-Beck, M. S. (1988). *Economics and Elections*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Linde, J., & Ekman, J. (2003). Satisfaction with democracy: A note on a frequently used indicator in comparative politics. *European Journal of Political Research*, *42*(3), 391–408.

Linz, J. J., & Stepan, A. (1996). *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

18

Loeza, S. (2006). Vicente Fox's Presidential Style and the New Mexican Presidency. *Mexican Studies*, *22*(1), 3–32.

Manzetti, L., & Wilson, C. J. (2009). Why Do Corrupt Governments Maintain Support? In C. H. Blake & S. D. Morris (Eds.), *Corruption and Democracy in Latin America* (pp. 77–93). Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

México Evalúa, Centro de Análisis Políticas Públicas, (2012). *Indicadores de Víctimas Visibles e Invisibles de Homicidio*. http://www.mexicoevalua.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MEX-EVA_INDX_IVVI-HLOW.pdf

New data reveals that 61,000 people disappeared, 50% more than reported. (2020, January 7). *Mexico News Daily*.

Norpoth, H. (1996). Presidents and the Prospective Voter. *The Journal of Politics*, *58*(3), 776–792.

Norris, J. A. (2016). Correlates of Vigilantism in Mexico, 2014. In *Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Political Science Association*, 24–26 March 2016, in Las Vegas Nevada.

Norris, J. A. (2019). Democracy Stillborn? Effects of Fear and Corruption in Mexico. In J. Hyles (Ed.), *The Americas and the New World Order* (pp. 108 – 129). Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Norris, P. (2011). Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

O'Donnell, G. A. (1973). *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*. (Politics of Modernization Series, No. 9). Berkley Institute of International Studies. https://archive.org/details/modernizationbur00odon/mode/2up

O'Neill, S. (2013). Corruption in Mexico. In *Latin Amerca's Moment*. Council on Foreign Relations. http://blogs.cfr.org/oneil/2013/07/18/corruption-in-mexico/#more-3535

Pan, M., Widner, B., & Enomoto, C. E. (2012, March). Growth and Crime in Contiguous States of Mexico. *Review of Urban & Regional Development Studies*, *24*(1–2), 51–64.

Pérez Correa, C. (2007, June 12 – 15). *Distrust and Disobedience: Discourse and Practice of Law in México*. A paper presented at the 2007 Seminar in Latin America on Constitutional and Political Theory (SELA) in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Przeworski, A. (1991). *Democracy and the Market*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Puddington, A. (2011). *The Authoritarian Challenge to Democracy*. freedomhouse.org. Retrieved January 25, 2021, from http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2011/essay-authoritarian-challenge-democracy

Punch, M. (2000). Police Corruption and Its Prevention. *European Journal of Criminal Policy and Research*, *8*(3), 301–324.

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

19

Robles, G., Magaloni, B., & Calderón, G. (2013). *The economic consequences of drug trafficking violence in Mexico*. Poverty and Governance, 5–6.

Rodriguez, C. R. (2020, January 3). Civilian among six dead in Nuevo Laredo gun battles reported on New Year's. *Laredo Morning Times*.

Rose-Ackerman, S. (1997). *Corruption and Good Governance: Discussion Paper 3*. United Nations Development Programme.

Ruiz Harrell, R. (2007*). Estadísticas oficiales vs. percepción ciudadana de la inseguridad: el subregistro delictivo. Salud Pública de México*, 4.

Rustow, D. A. (1970l). Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model. *Comparative Politics*, *2*(3), 337- 363.

Svolik, M. W. (2013). Learning to Love Democracy: Electoral Accountability and the Success of Democracy. *American Journal of Political Science*, *57*(3), 685–702.

Tóka, G. (1998). Political Support in East-Central Europe. In H. Klingemann & Fuchs D. (Eds.), *Citizens and the State* (pp. 354–382). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Tourliere, M. (2018, October 23). *El México actual: 39 mexicanos acumulan más de 10 mmdp,frente a 96 millones de pobres: Credit Suisse. Poceso*. Retrieved January 23, 2021, from https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2018/10/23/el-mexico-actual-39-mexicanos-acumulan-mas-de-10-mmdp-frente-96-millones-de-pobres-credit-suisse-214295.html

Wagner, A. F., Schneider, F., & Halla, M. (2009). The quality of institutions and satisfaction with democracy in Western Europe — A panel analysis. *European Journal of Political Economy*, *25*(1), 30–41.

Wallerstein, M. (1980). The Collapse of Democracy in Brazil: Its Economic Determinants. *Latin American Research Review*, 15(3), 3–40.

Intern. Journal of Profess. Bus. Review. | Miami, v. 9 | n. 4 | p. 01-20 | e04387 | 2024

20