

國立政治大學亞太研究英語碩士學位學程

International Master's Program in Asia- Pacific Studies

College of Social Sciences

National Chengchi University

碩士論文

Master's Thesis

拉丁美洲選舉廢票之研究 (1916-2018)

*Explaining Invalid Voting in Latin America (1916-2018)*

Student: Carolina Lui Lam Postigo 林伊娜

Advisor: Yen-Pin Su, Ph. D. 蘇彥斌 教授

中華民國 109 年 7 月

**July 2020**

## Abstract

What explains the variation in invalid votes across different countries? This thesis extends our knowledge about factors that impact voters' propensity to cast invalid ballots by testing economic, sociological, and institutional explanations. Unlike previous studies, this thesis contributes to the literature by providing systemic empirical analyses that cover samples of elections across a century. Drawing on evidence from presidential elections and lower chamber elections in Latin America between 1916 and 2018, this study demonstrates four findings. First, a country with an enforced compulsory voting system tends to have higher levels of invalid vote for lower chamber elections than presidential elections. Second, while the level of regime corruption has a positive effect on increasing invalid votes, such an effect is stronger for lower chamber elections than presidential elections. Third, concurrent elections tend to increase invalid vote for presidential elections but not for lower chamber elections. Fourth, a higher level of economic development tends to increase invalid vote for lower chamber elections but not for presidential elections.

### Keywords

Latin America, presidential elections, legislative elections, invalid voting, compulsory voting, corruption

### 摘要

為什麼有些國家的選舉會出現比較多的廢票、有些卻較少？本論文試圖從經濟、社會與制度的角度對於這個問題進行探討。與既有文獻不同的是，本論文的貢獻在於其實證分析包含超過一世紀的選舉資料。本研究以拉丁美洲各國總統選舉與下議院國會選舉（1916-1918）資料為基礎，得出四個研究發現。一、對於確實執行強制性投票制度的國家而言，其國會選舉的廢票率會比總統選舉的廢票率來得高；二、國家體制的貪腐程度會增加一國國會選舉與總統選舉的廢票率，但這個增強效果對於國會選舉的影響較大；三、當總統選舉與國會選舉同時舉行時，總統選舉的廢票率會比國會選舉的廢票率來得高；四、對於經濟發展程度較高的國家而言，其國會選舉的廢票率會比總統選舉的廢票率來得高。

### 關鍵字

拉丁美洲；總統選舉；國會選舉；廢票；強制性投票；貪腐

## Resumen

¿Qué explica esta variación del voto inválido entre los países? Utilizando los enfoques económicos, sociológico e institucional, esta tesis extiende nuestra comprensión sobre los factores que afectan la decisión del electorado y su opción de invalidar el voto. Al contrario de los estudios anteriores, esta tesis proporciona un análisis empírico-sistemático sobre la base de una muestra electoral de alrededor de un siglo. Así, sobre la base de las evidencias encontradas en las elecciones presidenciales y legislativas en América Latina, entre 1916 y 2018, este estudio sostiene cuatro resultados. Primero, un país con un sistema de votación obligatorio forzado tiende a tener niveles más altos de votos inválidos para las elecciones legislativas que para las elecciones presidenciales. Segundo, si bien el nivel de corrupción del régimen tiene un efecto positivo en el aumento de los votos inválidos, ese efecto es mayor para las elecciones legislativas que en las presidenciales. En tercer lugar, las elecciones concurrentes tienden a aumentar el voto inválido en las elecciones presidenciales, pero no para las elecciones legislativas. En cuarto lugar, un mayor nivel de desarrollo económico tiende a incrementar el voto inválido para las elecciones legislativas y no, para las presidenciales.

### Palabras claves

América Latina, elecciones presidenciales, elecciones legislativas, voto inválido, voto obligatorio, corrupción

### ملخص الدراسة

ما الذي يفسر الاختلاف في الأصوات الباطلة عبر البلدان المختلفة؟ تسعى هذه الأطروحة للتعرف على العوامل التي تؤثر على قيام الناخبين بالإدلاء بأصوات باطلة، عن طريق اختبار التفسيرات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والمؤسسية. على عكس الدراسات السابقة، تساهم هذه الأطروحة في الأدبيات من خلال توفير تحليلات تجريبية منهجية تغطي عينات من الانتخابات عبر قرن. وبالاعتماد على الأدلة من الانتخابات الرئاسية وانتخابات المجالس التشريعية في أمريكا اللاتينية بين عامي 1916 و 2018. كما توضح هذه الدراسة أربع نتائج، أولاً: تحصل الدولة التي لديها نظام تصويت إلزامي قسري على مستويات أعلى من التصويت الباطل لانتخابات المجالس التشريعية مقارنةً بالانتخابات الرئاسية. ثانياً: في حين أن مستوى فساد النظام له تأثير إيجابي على زيادة الأصوات الباطلة، فإن تأثير هذا يكون أقوى في انتخابات المجالس التشريعية عن الانتخابات الرئاسية. ثالثاً: تؤدي الانتخابات المتزامنة إلى زيادة الأصوات غير الصالحة للانتخابات الرئاسية ولكن ليس لانتخابات المجالس التشريعية. رابعاً: يؤدي المستوى الأعلى من التنمية الاقتصادية إلى زيادة الأصوات الباطلة لانتخابات المجالس التشريعية وليس الانتخابات الرئاسية.

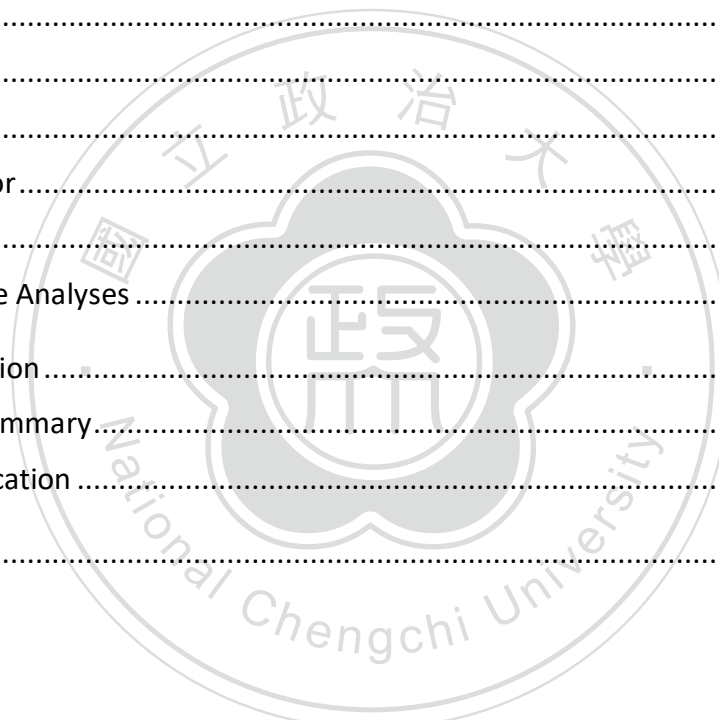
### الكلمات الدالة

أمريكا اللاتينية، انتخابات رئاسية، انتخابات تشريعية، تصويت باطل، اقتراع إلزامي، فساد.

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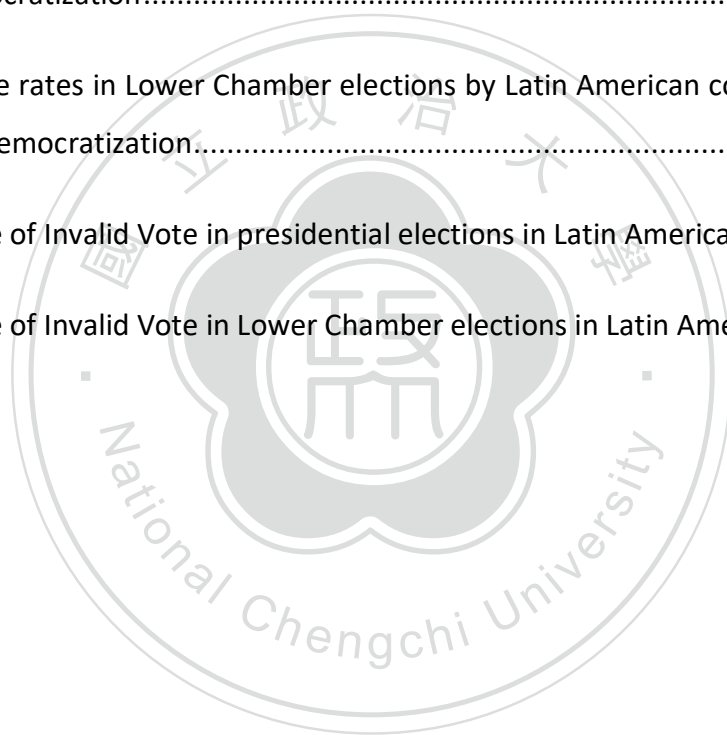
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# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Puzzle

Elections are crucial for the proper functioning of the country's political, social, and economic development, especially for democratic countries (Powell 1982). Elections allow citizens to accept or reject their representatives and their policy platforms (OSCE 2013), but it is common to observe null and blank ballots in every election. Those ballots are considered as invalid votes, and they reflect no support for parties or candidates. The presence of invalid voting has gained scholarly attentions (e.g., Cohen 2018; Lysek et al. 2019; Martinez I Coma and Werner 2018; Power and Garand 2007; Superti 2013; Ugglia 2008). While some studies contend that invalid voting results from the absence of voters' political skills or information about the elections (e.g., Pachon et al. 2017; Pierzgalski et al. 2019), other studies suggest that invalid voting is an expression of voter discontent or apathy (e.g., Cohen 2018; Power and Garand 2007; Ugglia 2008). Chilean Senator Navarro B. Alejandro argues that "The blank vote is a rejection against politicians and their programs, symbol of democracy, which gains adherents every day and is considered by many as an exemplary protest and as the best way to reject corruption and abuse of the oligarchic system of political parties" (Navarro 2010). Similarly, Malamud (2018, 5) mentioned, "The 'anger vote' is a cathartic act which response to the grave and widespread unrest and discontent with national institutions and representatives."

Using invalid voting as a form of political protest, influential elites or social groups might encourage the supporters to spoil their vote during a democratic crisis and repetitive political disenchantment. For instance, during the Argentine Constitutional Assembly Election of 1957, Domingo Peron called on voters to cast blank ballots (Baeza 2016). Eventually, invalid votes topped with 25% of the total votes, considering it as a political signal of the Peronist Resistance (Baeza 2016). In Argentina's 2001 legislative election, a strong campaign encouraged people to cast the so-called "voto bronca" (anger vote). It was an action for "the anger of citizens with the political class, which many accuse of corrupt and inoperative to get the country out of the severe

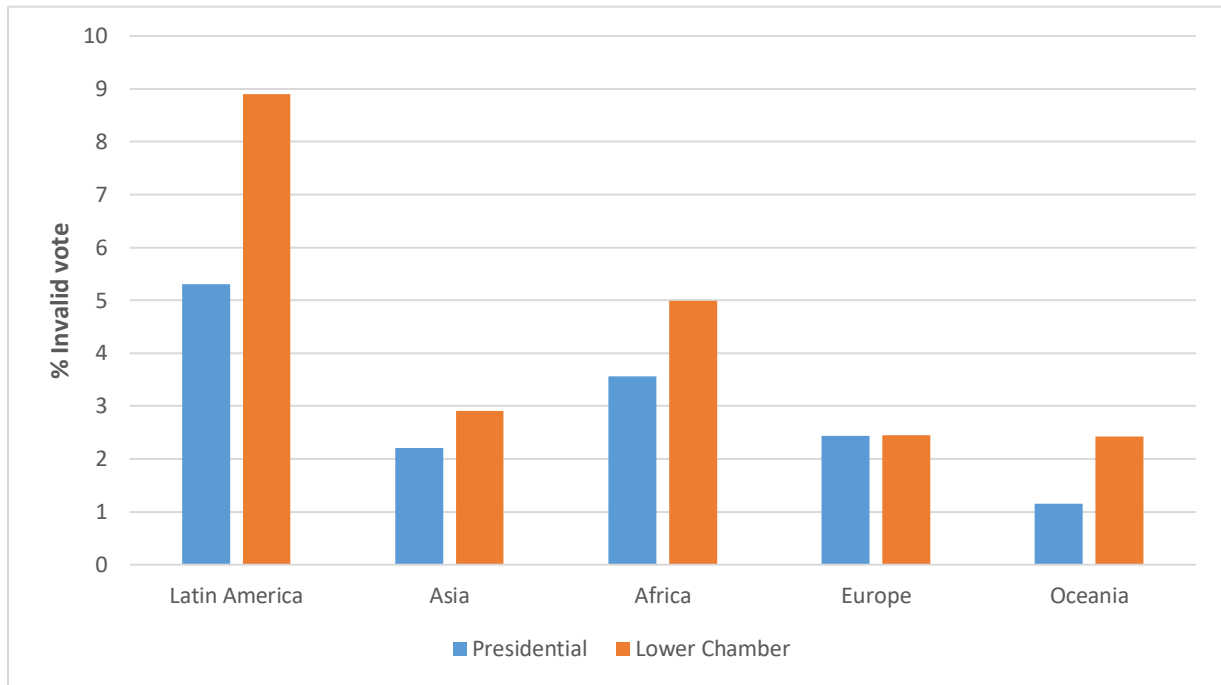


economic recession" (Sabanés 2001). In this manner, the "voto bronca" became a "democratic option" for Argentine voters (EL País 2001). During the second round of Argentina's 2015 presidential election, Nicolás del Caño (candidate for the Left and the Workers' Front) called to cast a blank ballot as an opposition to the political agenda of Mauricio Macri and Daniel Scioli (La Izquierda Diario 2015).

In Mexico, during the Lower Chamber election in 2009, campaigns for null votes through social networks such as #VeVotaAnula or "EllosNoNosRepresentan" ("They do not represent us") were regarded as flag of protests against the high rates of crimes, economic crises, and impunity in cases of corruption (Cisneros 2012). In Peru, during the second round of Presidential elections in 2001, Alvaro Mario Vargas Llosa and Jaime Bayly promoted the blank vote, arguing that "We are going to register a third candidate. That is the only clean candidate we can trust; the blank vote" (La Nación 2001). In the 2017 Ecuadorian presidential election, Jorge Cedeño López, the leader of the "Organization, Production and Development" movement, led a strong null vote campaign (El Universo 2017). In the 2018 Colombian presidential election, two influential politicians, Sergio Fajardo y Humberto de la Calle, stated their support for the blank vote, declaring that neither the right-wing candidate Ivan Duque nor the left-wing candidate Gustavo Petro was convincing them (Gonzales 2018).

Invalid voting varies widely across different countries and periods. Among different continents, Latin America has the highest invalid voting rates in Presidential and Lower Chamber elections in the world. On average, invalid ballots in Latin America represented more than 5 percent of all votes cast in Presidential elections and nearly reached to 9 percent of all ballots observed for Lower Chamber elections. In contrast, in regions such as Europe and Asia, rates of invalid voting are less than 3 percent on average. Hence, the high invalid votes in Latin America poses an interesting empirical puzzle.

**Figure 1: Invalid vote by World Region (1980-2019)**



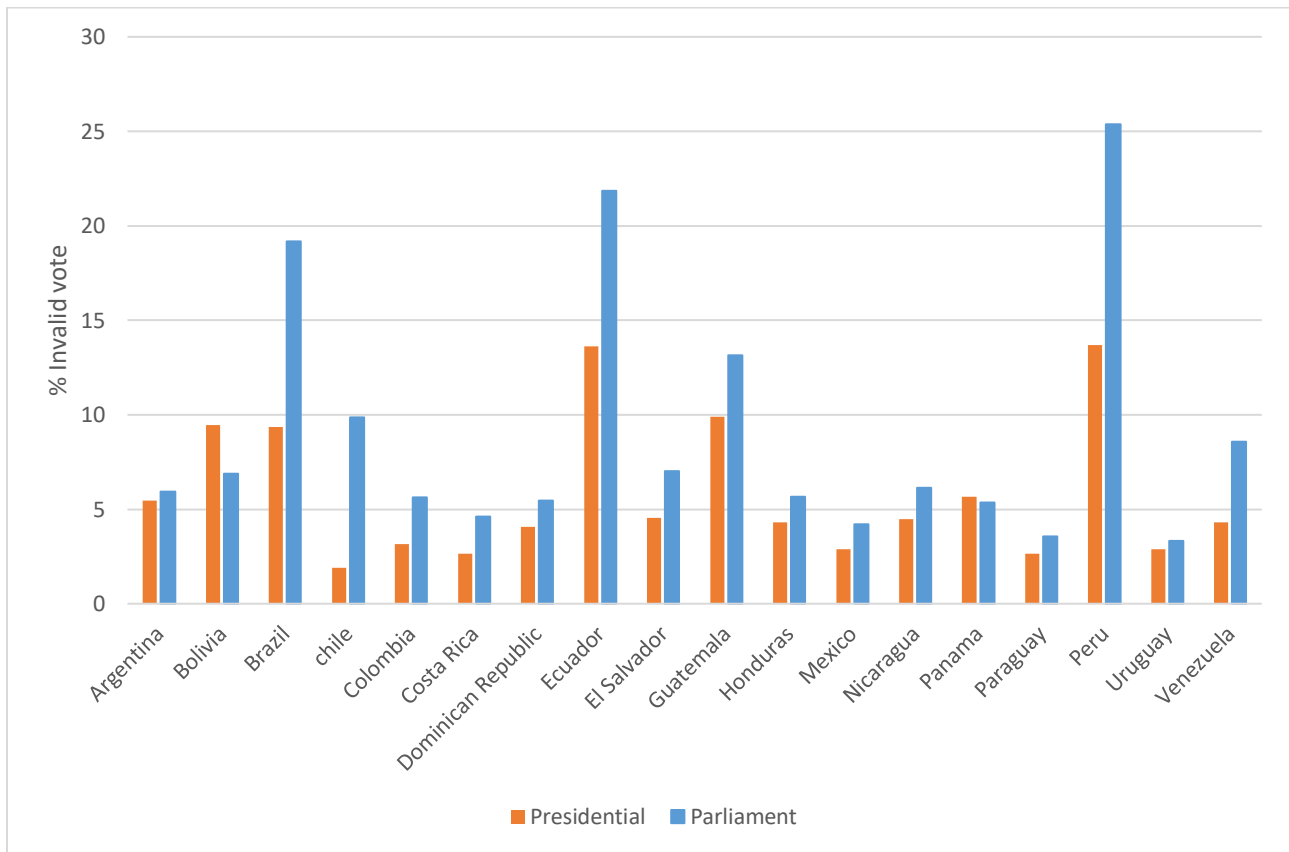
Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA 2019)

Amid a climate of political instability and citizens' support for democracy decreasing (Corporación Latinobarómetro 2018), Latin America faces a wave of significant increasing of invalid votes of the last four decades. As Figure 2 shows, the invalid voting rates have been generally higher for the lower chamber elections than that for the presidential elections, except Bolivia and Panama. The invalid voting rates in Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay are the lowest among all Latin American countries, while the invalid voting rates in Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru are the highest.

The empirical data suggest that focusing on only a few explanatory variables might not be sufficient to explain the variation of invalid voting in different countries. For instance, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil, where compulsory voting is strictly enforced by a system of sanctions displayed the highest percentages of invalid votes. However, using similar electoral regulation, Uruguay had the lowest level of invalid votes. In countries where voting is compulsory but without penalties, invalid voting rates were high in Guatemala and El Salvador but not in Costa Rica and

Paraguay. In Chile (post-2012), Mexico, and Colombia, where voting is voluntary, the percentage of invalid votes is low for presidential elections only.

**Figure 2: Percent Invalid vote in Presidential and Lower Chamber elections among Latin American countries (1916-2018)**



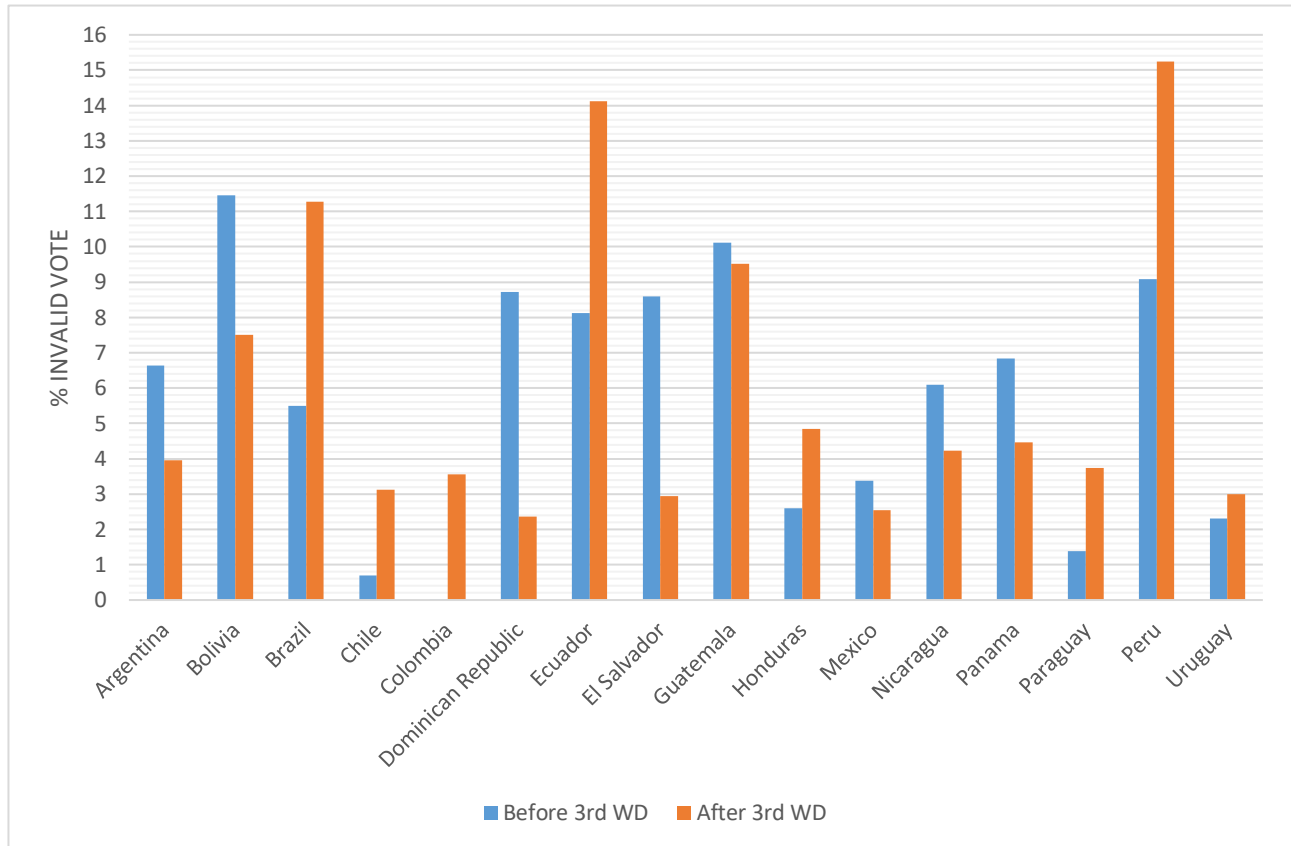
Source: Author. Data are from Nohlen (2005a; 2005b) and International IDEA (2019).

Democratization process might matter for explaining the variation in invalid voting. As Mainwaring and Pérez- Liñán (2005) argue, the third wave of democratization has been one of the most extensive around the world, involving a high number of countries and lasted for longer than any past waves. The overall trend towards democratization started in different years for each Latin American country. The first countries to celebrate them were the Dominican Republic and Ecuador in 1978; Peru in 1980, Honduras in 1981, followed by Bolivia (1982), Argentina (1983), Uruguay, and Brazil (1985); Paraguay, Panama, and Chile in 1989, Nicaragua (1990), El

Salvador (1994), Guatemala (1996). Finally, Mexico incorporated institutional mechanisms to enable the holding of competitive elections since 1997. Before the Third Wave of Democratization, Costa Rica reached its democratic regime in 1949, followed by Colombia and Venezuela in 1958 (Alcántara and Freidenberg 2006).

As Power and Garand (2007) contend, elections held in more democratic countries should generate lower levels of invalid voting. Did the third wave democratization affect the variation of invalid votes in Latin America? Figure 3 compares the average rates of invalid voting in presidential elections in sixteen Latin American countries before and after the third wave democratization. In eight of the sixteen Latin countries that held presidential elections such as Argentina, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama, the variation of invalid votes was lower after the third wave. Nevertheless, contrary to what Power and Garand (2007) have theorized, in countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, the average rates of invalid voting were higher after the third wave. Moreover, Figure 4 compares the average rates of invalid voting in lower chamber elections in thirteen Latin American countries before and after the third wave democratization. Again, contrary to Power and Garand (2007), the invalid voting rates are higher in the post-third wave period for most Latin American countries.

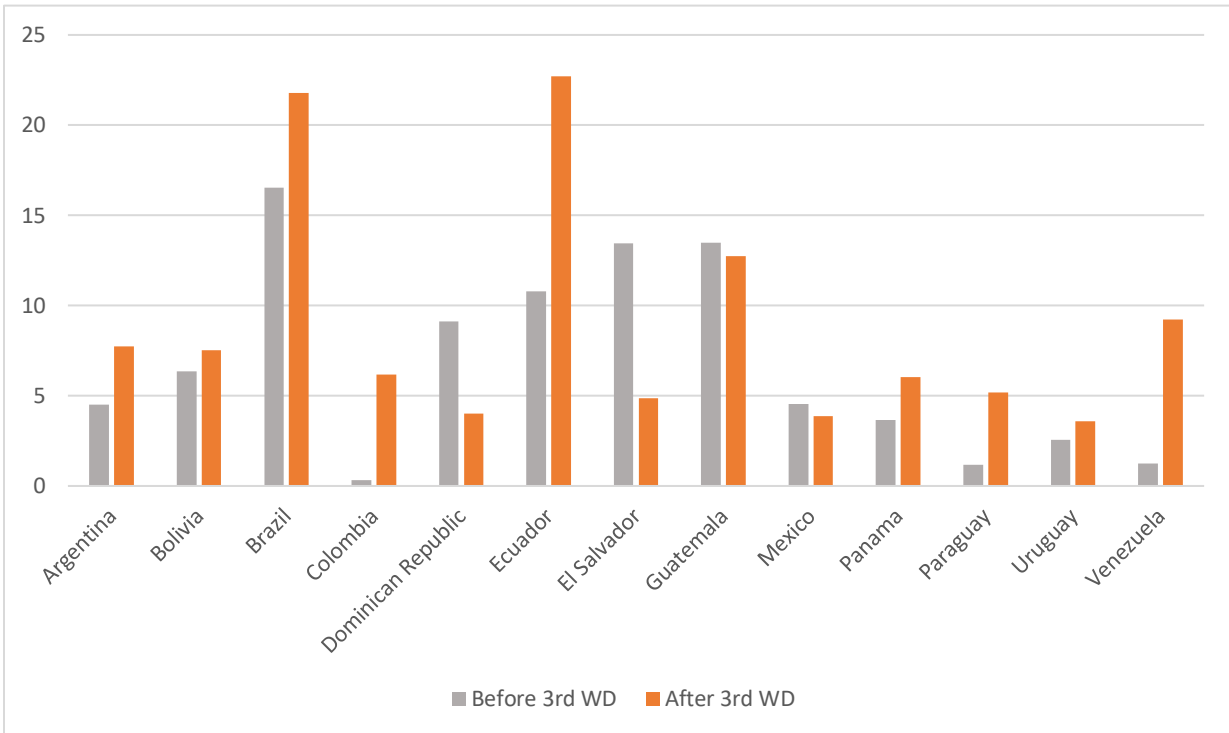
**Figure 3: Invalid vote rates in presidential elections by Latin American countries Pre vs Post the Third Wave of Democratization**



Notes: The availability of information limits the range of years of each country: Argentina (1916 to 2015); Bolivia (1951- 2014); Dominican Republic (1962 - 2016); El Salvador (1984 - 2014); Guatemala (1958 - 2015); Mexico (1982 - 2018); Nicaragua (1984 - 2016); Panama (1948 - 2014); Brazil (1945- 2018); Chile (1938-2017), Colombia (1946 - 2018); Ecuador (1968-2017); Honduras (1948-2017); Paraguay (1958-2018); Peru (1956-2016) and Uruguay (1984 - 2014). Likewise, due to the limited information, Costa Rica and Venezuela were not included in this Figure.

Source: Author. Data are from Nohlen (2005a; 2005b) and International IDEA (2019).

**Figure 4: Invalid vote rates in Lower Chamber elections by Latin American countries Pre vs Post the Third Wave of Democratization**



Notes: The availability of information limits the range of years of each country: Argentina (1916 -2015); Bolivia (1956-2014); Brazil (1950-2018); Colombia (1951-2018); Dominican Republic (1962-2016); Ecuador (1962-2017); El Salvador (1985-2018); Guatemala (1959-2015); Mexico (1970-2018); Panama (1978-2014); Paraguay (1963-2018); Uruguay (1971-2014) and Venezuela (1947-2005). Due to the limited information, Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru were not included in this Figure.

Source: Author. Data are from Nohlen (2005a; 2005b) and International IDEA (2019).

The growing invalid votes in Latin America elections has been a remarkable phenomenon. The above discussion shows that the level of Latin America’s invalid vote is higher than that of other regions, and there is a great variation of invalid voting rates within the region. Moreover, it seems that electoral systems and the democratization process are insufficient to explain the variation in invalid voting rates. Although, it is expected a different situation when this variation of invalid voting comes from the voter discontent or apathy against corruption committed by politicians or the incumbent government and its economic measures as it is seen in the context of mentioned invalid vote campaigns.

Therefore, the invalid voting in Latin America poses an empirical puzzle. To address this puzzle, this thesis aims to systematically examine the factors that impact voters' propensity to cast invalid votes. Specifically, I will test hypotheses regarding compulsory voting system, concurrent elections, level of economic performance, level of education, level of democracy, and corruption on invalid voting rates. Based on data of presidential elections and lower chamber elections in 18 Latin American countries from 1916 to 2018, I conduct mixed-method analyses to analyze the impacts of different factors. I conduct quantitative analyses to show the relative importance of each variable on invalid vote. I also conduct qualitative analyses to illustrate how invalid voting campaigns work in Latin America. In the aggregate, invalid voting responds predictably to certain features of institutional, socioeconomic, and political such as compulsory voting system, concurrent elections, economic development, and corruption, in a different way, for the presidential and lower chamber election. And while I find evidence that a country with an enforced compulsory voting system and a high level of corruption affect more the increasing of invalid vote rates for lower chamber elections than presidential elections like it happened in Argentina 2001 and Ecuador 2006 elections. Concurrent elections tend to increase invalid vote only for presidential elections; and, a higher level of economic development tends to increase invalid vote just for lower chamber elections. Overall, this study aims to fulfill the gap in the literature and provide policy implications for voting behavior and democratization.

## **1.2 Why Study Invalid votes?**

Generally speaking, there are two types of invalid vote. The first type is a ballot left in unmarked, which is often called "blank votes." The second type is a ballot that is marked in a way that makes it impossible to identify the voter's choice, or a ballot that has been torn or defaced, which is often called "null votes" or "spoiled votes." Following previous literature (Cohen 2018; Lysek et al. 2019; Power and Garand 2007; Ugglá 2008), this thesis considers blank votes, null votes, and spoiled votes as invalid votes, and this thesis does not distinguish whether an invalid vote is cast intentionally or by error.

Voting is arguable the most remarkable feature of a democratic regime by which voters' political preferences manifest in a single act. Hence, understanding the factors that affect the

voter's choice to cast invalid votes is of crucial importance in the country's political life. Whether citizens cast invalid votes intentionally or accidentally, an extraordinarily high percentage of invalid votes might gravely undermine the well-functioning of the electoral system (Lysek et al. 2019) as well as democratic legitimacy (Lysek et al. 2019; Power and Grand 2007). This issue is particularly crucial for new democracies as Latin America (Kouba and Lysek 2016).

Moreover, although invalid votes do not count in favor of a particular political party or candidate, they are not innocuous in tight electoral contests. For instance, in a highly competitive election, a small portion of null or blank votes could make a big difference in the electoral results, such as enhance the probability of holding a run-off election (Cohen 2018).

Another implication is related to the government performance. High levels of invalid voting rates might represent that voters are generally disenchanted with the candidates, political parties, or the incumbent government, which could lead to political instability. In this sense, invalid voting might not only serve as a mean of protest, but also a way to change the configuration of the electoral scenario. Therefore, high levels of invalid voting rates could push the ruling party to coordinate with other political actors and improve the government performance (Cohen 2016). In short, it is crucial to understand why some countries have higher invalid voting than others.

Why is it important to study invalid vote in Latin America? First, all Latin American countries regulate the electoral process through a special law which involves an explicit section to those categories of votes often be regarded as invalid. In Argentina, it is regulated by National Electoral Code - Decree N° 2135 (article 101), Bolivia adopted the Electoral System Law- Law N° 026 (article 161) while Brazil enacted the Electoral Code- Law N° 4.737 (article 224). Chile regulates the electoral process through the Law of Voting and Popular indexes- Law N° 18.700 (article 71). In Colombia, the Electoral Code - Decree N° 2241 (article 137) besides, in Costa Rica, the Electoral Code - Law N° 8765 (article 194), Dominican Republic, the Electoral Law- Law N° 275-97 (article 129), Ecuador is the Electoral Law- Law N° 59-86 (article 59) and, in El Salvador is the Electoral Code - Decree N° 413 (article 207). In Guatemala, it is ruled by the Electoral and



Political Parties Law-Decree 1-85 (article 237), in Honduras, the Elections and Political Organizations Act - Decree N° 44-2004 (article 207).

For Mexico, the General Law of Electoral Institutions and Procedures published was on January 27, 2017 (article 288), while in Nicaragua, it is regulated by the Electoral Law- Law N° 331 (article 125). Likewise, Panama has the Electoral Code (article 268), Paraguay, the Electoral Code N° 834/96 (articles 225 and 226), Peru is the Electoral Law- Law N° 26859 (article 286), Uruguay with the Electoral Law- Law N° 7812 (article 106) and Venezuela adopted the Organic Law for Electoral Processes in 2012 (article 106).

Second, as shown in the previous section, invalid voting is much higher in Latin America than in other regions of the world. However, compared to studies of invalid votes in other countries or regions (Aldashev and Mastrobuoni 2019; Hill and Young 2007; Martins 2017; McAllister and Makkai 1993; Zulfikarpasic 2001), the issue of invalid votes in Latin America has received considerably less attention. While there are a number of single-country studies of invalid votes for Latin America (Arbache et al. 2015; Cisneros 2012; Driscoll and Nelson 2014; Power and Roberts 1995; Sanchez 2016; Sanchez Berzain 2019), there are few comparative analyses across Latin American countries (e.g., Cohen 2018; Power and Garand 2007). Unlike those studies mentioned above, this study is unique because it uses comprehensive electoral data in Latin America to examine determinants of invalid votes, and thus this thesis might facilitate a better understanding of what explains different levels of invalid votes across time and space.

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Perspective

To explain why some countries, have a higher level of invalid vote while others do not, previous studies have focused on three approaches: institutional framework, socioeconomic characteristics, and political context (Martinez I Coma and Werner 2018; Power and Garand 2007). Each approach focuses on a number of variables, which will be discussed as follows.

### 2.1 Institutional framework

Studies that focus on institutional factors tend to explain the occurrence of invalid votes by examining the institutional design, legal and formal structures that make voting easy or difficult, desirable, or not to turn out to the polls (Power and Garand 2007). For example, Pierzgalski et al. (2019) argue that the implementation of a complex or ambiguous ballot design might result in more invalid votes. Pachon et al. (2017) find that simplifying the ballot design could explain the decrease of spoiled ballots in Colombia observed in 2007. Also, the introduction of electronic voting machines could influence the rates of ballot invalidation, as it is shown in Brazil (Nicolau 2015). Furthermore, the combination of high district magnitude with personalized voting tends to increase the percentage of spoiled votes (Power and Garand 2007).

Relatedly, there are certain electoral rules, ballot structures, and party system configurations that may favor the casting of invalid votes. Significantly, there are two elements of the institutional framework that have been suggested to affect the number of invalid votes: compulsory voting and whether presidential election and lower chamber election are held concurrently.

Compulsory voting may respond to many plausible conceptions but it encloses a legal standpoint imposed by the national constitutions and electoral laws to increase voter turnout (Luiss 2008). Although compulsory voting law can certainly raise and equalize electoral turnout, it is questionable if forcing people to cast would be beneficial for democracy (Smith 2020). For instance, Gratschew (2002) finds that compulsory voting could encourage dissatisfied voters to

cast invalid votes, even though the government contends that compulsory voting is necessary to fully perform civic duty.

Studies of invalid voting find that there is a strong positive correlation between compulsory voting and the percentage of invalid votes (Blais 2006; Kouba and Lysek 2016; Martinez I Coma and Werner 2018; Power and Garand 2007; Power and Roberts 1995; Ugglia 2008). Studying democratic Lower Chamber elections in 73 countries on five continents from 1970 to 2011, Martinez I Coma and Werner (2018) argued that both enforced and unenforced compulsory systems increase the level of invalid voting. Power and Garand's (2007) analysis from 80 legislative elections held in 18 Latin American democracies shows that the combination of compulsory voting with sanctions,<sup>1</sup> which are strongly enforced, increases the propensity to cast invalid ballots. Similarly, this assumption is a response from politically unsophisticated and uninterested voters as well as those disaffected with democracy who would rather not vote at all and may invalidate their ballots as a protest signal (Engelen 2007; Singh 2015).

On the other hand, in a presidential system, voters enjoy a maximum discretion to express their preferences over political representation on the leadership of the executive and legislative branches (Carey 1998) through clear identification of their favorite candidate in their ballots. Nevertheless, that fact may be altered by a factor in the electoral cycle, such as concurrent elections (Dettrey and Schwindt-Bayer 2009). Many studies have shown that when presidential election and legislative election are held on the same date, voter turnout tends to be higher (Carreras 2017; Dettrey and Schwindt-Bayer 2009; Stockemer and Calca 2012).

Do concurrent elections matter for explaining the level of invalid vote? Recent studies suggest that the answer is "yes." Lysek et al. (2019) find that concurrent elections led to a substantial impact on invalid voting in post-communist democracies. Using data of presidential elections in post-communist and Latin American democracies between 1980 and 2013, Kouba

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<sup>1</sup> Countries in Latin American that are regulated by the compulsory voting system are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominica Republic, Ecuador, Honduras post-1991, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay. And those adopted a voluntary vote system are: Chile post-2012, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala post-1990, Nicaragua and, Venezuela post-1993.

and Lysek (2016) find that when lower chamber and presidential elections were held on the same date, invalid votes tend to be higher.

## 2.2 Socioeconomic characteristics

The second approach for explaining invalid voting focuses on the social structure and the economic capacity of voters to complete the vote. For instance, the level of invalid vote tends to be lower in highly urbanized areas because political information is easier to obtain (Power and Garand 2007). Pilet et al. (2019) found that invalid votes significantly increase in municipalities with a lower socio-economic performance. However, other studies find that urbanization is negatively associated with invalid votes (Ugla 2008; Zulfikarpasic 2001). Martins (2017) finds that unemployment in urban areas increases the rate of null and blank voting, while Ugla (2008) points out that unemployment rates have no significant effects on the invalid ballot.

Economic performance can have significant effects on the political participation of citizens (Powell 1982) since it influences the nature of socio-economic factors such as level of education, access to information, and levels of wealth which, in one way or another, transforms the relationships among different groups in society to create a diversity of interests. All of these factors are most likely to increase the political participation of the citizens, affect voting behavior and political preferences. Relatedly, Power and Garand (2007) argued that higher per capita GDP increases personal economic satisfaction as well as improve trust in the political system, thus reducing the probability of casting an invalid vote. However, this assumption for Cohen (2018, 406) has no statistical significance on the variation of the invalid vote since "policy-motivated invalid voting is not driven, on average, by poor perceived economic outcomes, but rather by the perception that government performance has been poor across a range of policy areas."<sup>2</sup>

The level of education also matters for explaining electoral outcomes. For instance, existing studies have shown that education is strongly correlated to voter turnout (Driscoll and

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<sup>2</sup> The perception of good economic performance is scarce in Latin America (Corporación Latinobarómetro 2018). For 2018, according to Corporación Latinobarómetro (2018), around 35 percent of Latin Americans stated that the most critical economic issues within their respective countries are comprised of unemployment, low wages, and poverty.

Nelson 2014; Lysek et al. 2019; Power and Garand 2007; Tenn 2007). Educated citizens are more informed of the issues that are at stake in an election contest. They can read and comprehend voting and registration procedures (Driscoll and Nelson 2014), as well as likely having the awareness of considering voting as a civic duty (Tenn 2007).

Martinez I Coma and Werner (2018) argued that voters with higher education levels seem to have a slight tendency to increase levels of invalid voting, as a way of intentionally expressing their discontent with the current political system (Zulfikarpasic 2001). However, other comparative studies reported a negative relationship between educational level and invalid vote (Aldashev and Mastrobuoni 2019; Blais 2006; Driscoll and Nelson 2014; Kouba and Lysek 2016; Power and Garand 2007). Less-educated voters<sup>3</sup> tend to cast invalid votes because it would be more difficult for them to understand the politics and voting laws in particular. Similarly, Hill and Young (2007) and McAllister and Makkai (1993) showed that in Australia, the limited proficiency of a country's language (English) in immigrant communities make these "new" voters more likely to spoil their votes.

### **2.3 Political context**

The political context approach finds its argument in the form of protest against the performance of political institutions, due to dissatisfaction against the regime and political system (Cohen 2018; Driscoll and Nelson 2014; Martinez I Coma and Werner 2018; Lysek et al. 2019; Power and Garand 2007; Ugglá 2008). Power and Garand (2007) found strong evidence that a negative change in levels of democracy is associated with a higher level of the invalid vote. At the individual level, Driscoll and Nelson (2014) report that spoiled ballots were driven by political concern where dissatisfaction with government was rampant. Cohen (2018) finds, using individual-level data across the Latin American region between 2008 and 2014, that perceptions of poor government performance and those who are more interested in politics on average might lead to more invalid voting. Similarly, Arbache et al. (2015) argue a low evaluation of political institutions is a powerful predictor of invalid voting. Power and Roberts' (1995) study of twelve

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<sup>3</sup> In Latin America, a portion of voters is illiterate or semi-illiterate. For 2018, in this region, nearly 6.2 percent could not read or write (Statista 2020). Therefore, voting rights are restricted to these marginalized societal groups.

legislative elections in Brazil between 1945 and 1990 suggests that invalid voting rose when the regime was most discredited.

One important political variable that might affect electoral outcomes is the issue of corruption. A classic and most widely used concept of corruption is given by The World Bank (1997) as the “misuse or the abuse of public office for private gain.” The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development- OECD (2013) points out that corruption indicates an “active or passive misuse of the powers of Public officials (appointed or elected) for private financial or other benefits,” i.e., an illegal act committed by a public official who took advantage of the position and misused its power entrusted by law for personal gain and to provide favors to the third person.

Recent literature has suggested that the level of corruption is associated with invalid votes (e.g., Martinez I Coma and Werner 2018), further suggesting that a discontented individual is likely to cast a spoiled ballot as a rejection of a corrupted government. One main reason is that the abuse of public office for private gain erodes people’s trust in government and institutions. In this sense, voter discontent and outright indignation have delivered in diverse expressions of dissatisfaction, and one type of these expressions is spoiling their votes.

In Latin America, the growing distrust and widespread discontent towards politicians by citizens have become a trend that has grown up with the exposure of corruption over the last years (Galindo 2019). As it is presented in the Global Corruption Barometer by Transparency International (2019), around 57 percent of Latin American citizens think their government is not doing enough to end corruption. This argument is bolstered with the significant number of presidents and former presidents in the region who have been forced from office, jailed, or investigation of corruption cases.

To address the research question of what explains the variation in invalid votes in Latin America, I argue that compulsory voting system, concurrent elections, level of economic performance, level of educational attainment, level of democracy, and corruption are possible factors in explaining the variation of invalid voting for presidential (first round) and lower

chamber elections in Latin America countries. To test the effects of each variable on the level of invalid vote, I generate the following hypotheses:

H1: A country tends to have more invalid votes in countries that adopt a compulsory voting system.

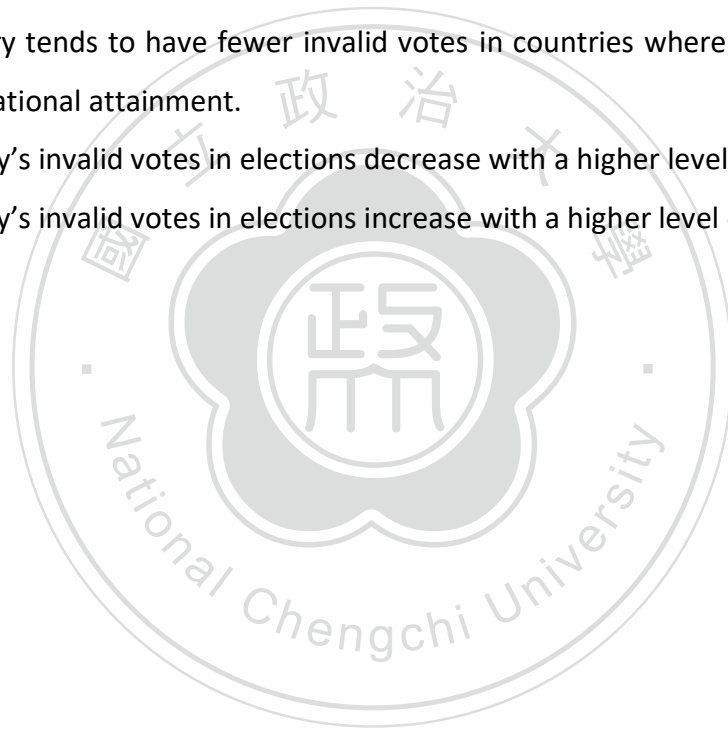
H2: A country tends to have more invalid votes in elections when the presidential election and lower chamber elections are held on the same date (concurrent elections).

H3: A country tends to have fewer invalid votes in countries with a better economic performance.

H4: A country tends to have fewer invalid votes in countries where the citizens have a higher level of educational attainment.

H5: A country's invalid votes in elections decrease with a higher level of democracy.

H6: A country's invalid votes in elections increase with a higher level of corruption.



## Chapter Three: Research Design

### 3.1 Large- N Tests

#### 3.1.1 Dependent Variable

For this study, the unit of analysis is country-election. The dependent variable for this study is the percentage of invalid vote in an election. I gathered data from Nohlen (2005a; 2005b) and International IDEA (2019) for presidential elections and lower chamber elections in 18 Latin American countries from 1916 to 2018. For countries that adopt a presidential run-off electoral system, I used the results for the first-round election. Due to the unavailability of historical data, presidential and lower chamber elections for all countries start at different times. Table 1 shows the observations included for the statistical analyses.

**Table 1: Observations Included for the Statistical Analyses**

Country Name	Presidential Elections	Lower Chamber Elections
Argentina	1916, 1922, 1928, 1931, 1937, 1946, 1951, 1958, 1963, 1973, 1983, 1989, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015	1916, 1918, 1920, 1922, 1924, 1926, 1928, 1930, 1931, 1934, 1936, 1938, 1940, 1942, 1946, 1951, 1954, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1965, 1973, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017
Bolivia	1951, 1956, 1960, 1964, 1966, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2014	1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2014
Brazil	1945, 1950, 1955, 1960, 1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018	1950, 1954, 1958, 1962, 1966, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018



Chile	1938, 1942, 1946, 1952, 1958, 1964, 1970, 1989, 1993, 1999, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017	1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017
Colombia	1946, 1949, 1958, 1962, 1966, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018	1951, 1953, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018
Costa Rica	1953, 1958, 1962, 1966, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018	1953, 1958, 1962, 1966, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018
Dominican Republic	1962, 1966, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016	1962, 1966, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2016
Ecuador	1968, 1978, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2017	1962, 1979, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2017
El Salvador	1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014	1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018
Guatemala	1958, 1966, 1970, 1974, 1982, 1985, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015	1959, 1961, 1966, 1970, 1985, 1990, 1994, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015
Honduras	1948, 1954, 1971, 1981, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017	1981, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017,
Mexico	1982, 1988, 1994, 2000, 2006, 2012, 2018	1970, 1973, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018
Nicaragua	1984, 1990, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016	1990, 1996, 2001, 2006
Panama	1948, 1952, 1956, 1964, 1968, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014	1978, 1984, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Paraguay	1958, 1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1989, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018	1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1989, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018

Peru	1956, 1962, 1963, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016	1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016
Uruguay	1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014	1971, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
Venezuela	1958, 1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2006	1947, 1958, 1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2005

Note: Due to a lack of availability of reliable data, I do not include some electoral years from Venezuela and Nicaragua in this research.

### 3.1.2 Independent Variables

As discussed before, this thesis will test variables from three main explanatory approaches for invalid votes: institutional framework, socioeconomic characteristics, and political context. For the Institutional variables, I include two variables about compulsory voting system. It will be operationalized as three categorical variables: voluntary voting system, unenforced mandatory voting system (without fines or legal sanctions), and enforced compulsory voting (with fines and legal sanctions). The data are from the Compulsory voting index from V-Dem Dataset - Version 9 (Coppedge et al. 2019; Pemstein et al. 2019). In my empirical models, I include unenforced mandatory voting system and enforced compulsory voting system and leave the voluntary voting system as the reference group. In addition, I also include a variable for the concurrent elections. This variable will be a dummy variable coded as "1" when presidential and lower chamber election were held on the same date, and 0 otherwise. The data are from Nohlen (2005a; 2005b) and International IDEA (2019).

For the socioeconomic variables, I include the level of economic development, which is operationalized as GDP per capita (log). I also include GDP growth as a variable for economic performance. The data are from V-Dem Dataset - Version 8 (Coppedge et al. 2018; Pemstein et al. 2018). Moreover, I include the level of education in the models. I use the Education15+ Index from the V-Dem Dataset - Version 9 (Coppedge et al. 2019; Pemstein et al. 2019), which is operationalized as taking the average years of educational attainment among citizens who are older than 15.

For the variables regarding political context, I first include the level of democracy, using the Polity revised combined score from the V-Dem Dataset - Version 9 (Coppedge et al. 2019; Pemstein et al. 2019). This variable is a modified version of the Polity variable added to facilitate the use of the Polity regime measure in time-series analyses. Last, I test the effects of corruption on invalid vote. I use the Regime Corruption index by the V-Dem Dataset - Version 9 (Coppedge et al. 2019; Pemstein et al. 2019). The main question of this index is: To what extent do political actors use political office for private or political gain? The index is formed by taking the reversed point estimates (so that higher scores = more regime corruption) from a Bayesian factor analysis model of the indicators for executive embezzlement, executive bribes, legislative corruption, and judicial corruption.

### 3.1.3 Control Variables

In addition to the independent variables that I mentioned above, I control for a dummy variable for founding election. According to Bogdanor (1990), founding elections are often known as the endpoint of democratic transition when democratic governments replace authoritarian regimes. For Power and Garand (2007), it is expected that particularly in founding elections, the variation of invalid ballots to be lower than in other polls because of those elections are the first free and democratic contest after the end of authoritarian power. The founding election variable is coded as "1" when the election is the first election in a regime period after the end of authoritarian rule, and 0 otherwise. The data for this variable are from Nohlen (2005a; 2005b), Power et al. (2004), and Lucardi (2006).

Table 2 provides a short description for the variables used in the statistical analyses. And, Tables 3 and 4 provide summary statistics of the variables used in the empirical analysis.

**Table 2: List of Variables**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Labels</b>	<b>Measurements</b>	<b>Sources</b>
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	Invalid vote	Percentage of invalid voting in the first round of Presidential election and the unicameral national parliaments or lower chamber of the national legislatures.	Nohlen (2005a; 2005b) and International IDEA (2019).
<i>Independent Variables</i>	Enforced compulsory voting system	A dummy variable coded as “1” for countries with an enforced compulsory voting system, and “0” otherwise.	The Compulsory voting index from the V-Dem Dataset - Version 9 (Coppedge et al. 2019; Pemstein et al. 2019).
	Unenforced compulsory voting system	A dummy variable coded as “1” for countries with an unenforced compulsory voting system, and “0” otherwise.	The Compulsory voting index from the V-Dem Dataset - Version 9 (Coppedge et al. 2019; Pemstein et al. 2019).
	Concurrent elections	A dummy variable coded as “1” when presidential and Lower chamber election were held on the same date, and “0” otherwise.	Nohlen (2005a; 2005b) and International IDEA (2019).
	GDP per capita	Natural log of GDP per capita	V-Dem Dataset – Version 8 (Coppedge et al. 2018; Pemstein et al. 2018)
	GDP growth	Percentage of GDP growth	V-Dem Dataset – Version 8 (Coppedge et al. 2018; Pemstein et al. 2018)

	Level of education	Percentage of average years of education among citizens older than 15	The data is from the Education15+ Index from the V-Dem Dataset - Version 9 (Coppedge et al. 2019; Pemstein et al. 2019)
	Level of democracy	The “Polity Score” evaluates the type of regime in a country with a range from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy). This variable is lagged by one year.	The Polity revised combined score from the V-Dem Dataset - Version 9 (Coppedge et al. 2019; Pemstein et al. 2019)
	Level of corruption	The “Regime Corruption” examines to what extent do political actors use political office for private or political gain. An interval from low to high (0-1)	Regime Corruption index from the V-Dem Dataset - Version 9 (Coppedge et al. 2019; Pemstein et al. 2019)
<i>Control Variables</i>	Founding election	A dummy variable coded as “1” when it is the first election in a regime period after the end of authoritarian rule, and “0” otherwise.	Nohlen (2005a; 2005b), Power et al. (2004), and Lucardi (2006).

**Table 3. Summary Statistics of the Variables Used in the Empirical Analyses for presidential election**

Variables	Mean	St. Dev	Min	Max	Obs
Invalid vote	5.857655	5.49813	0.01	38.37	226
Unenforced compulsory voting system (H1)	0.4823009	0.5007958	0	1	226
Enforced compulsory voting system (H1)	0.2831858	0.451546	0	1	226
Concurrent Elections (H2)	0.7743363	0.4189466	0	1	226
Logged per capita GDP (H3)	8.567104	0.6505808	7.102	9.973	221
GDP growth (H3)	0.0243439	0.0552165	-0.183	0.282	221
Educational attainment (H4)	5.906093	1.947284	1.64	10.36	226
Level of democracy (H5)	4.380531	5.641621	-9	10	226
Regime corruption (H6)	0.5895752	0.260299	0.02	0.963	226
Founding elections	0.1327434	0.3400503	0	1	226

**Table 4. Summary Statistics of the Variables Used in the Empirical Analyses for lower chamber election**

Variables	Mean	St. Dev	Min	Max	Obs
Invalid vote	8.649529	8.266502	0.05	46.12	255
Unenforced compulsory voting system (H1)	0.5098039	0.500887	0	1	255
Enforced compulsory voting system (H1)	0.2705882	0.4451374	0	1	255
Concurrent Elections (H2)	0.6196078	0.486438	0	1	255
Logged per capita GDP (H3)	8.680743	0.6416347	7.127	9.973	249
GDP growth (H3)	0.0256948	0.0542779	-0.183	0.282	249
Educational attainment (H4)	6.010302	1.915281	1.808	10.36	255
Level of democracy (H5)	4.364706	5.728463	-9	10	255
Regime corruption (H6)	0.5839294	0.2495473	0.02	0.963	255
Founding elections	0.1098039	0.31326	0	1	255

### 3.2 Methods and Estimation Techniques

In this research, I employ a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative methods) approach for empirical analyses. The mixed-method seeks data from as many different sources as possible and employs more than one way to secure and validate the data. Besides, it provides more rigorous results and a better understanding of the research problem than any approach alone (Haq 2014). For the quantitative analyses, I employ two estimation techniques. First, I use ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to estimate invalid vote. Second, I use pooled time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) analyses with panel-corrected standard errors (Beck and Katz 1995).

To further explore the mechanisms behind the quantitative findings (Grinnell and Unrau 2010), I conduct comparative case studies of campaigns that encourage casting invalid votes for the qualitative analyses. Why do campaigns for invalid voting matter? Jacobson (2015) argued that information provided by campaigns affect the vote decision in different ways. In general, the electoral campaigns persuade people to vote for a particular candidate, but the campaigns can also be mobilized for advocating not to cast an invalid ballot. Relatedly, campaigns in favor of invalid votes are directed not only to voters with party identification but mainly to voters who want to exercise their right to abstain (Cisneros 2012). Crespo (2010) explains that these social movements push the idea of a total boycott by using a null vote rather than abstaining.

For the comparative case studies, I examine invalid voting campaigns during presidential elections and lower chamber elections in Latin America based on Internet sources, journals, books, newspapers, and other mass media. I analyze the cross-national similarities and differences in the strategic settings of the campaigns such as election round, compulsory voting system, concurrent elections, justification of campaigns, leadership, and results. Although there are previous country-level studies on invalid voting campaigns in Latin America (e.g., Cisneros 2012; Cisneros and Freigedo 2014; D' Adamo and Garcia 2003; Sonnleitner 2019), regional comparative evidence is scarce (Cohen 2016). Therefore, the qualitative analyses of this research aims to fill the gap in the literature for providing a better understanding of the behavioral dynamics of the invalid vote.

## Chapter Four: Quantitative Analysis

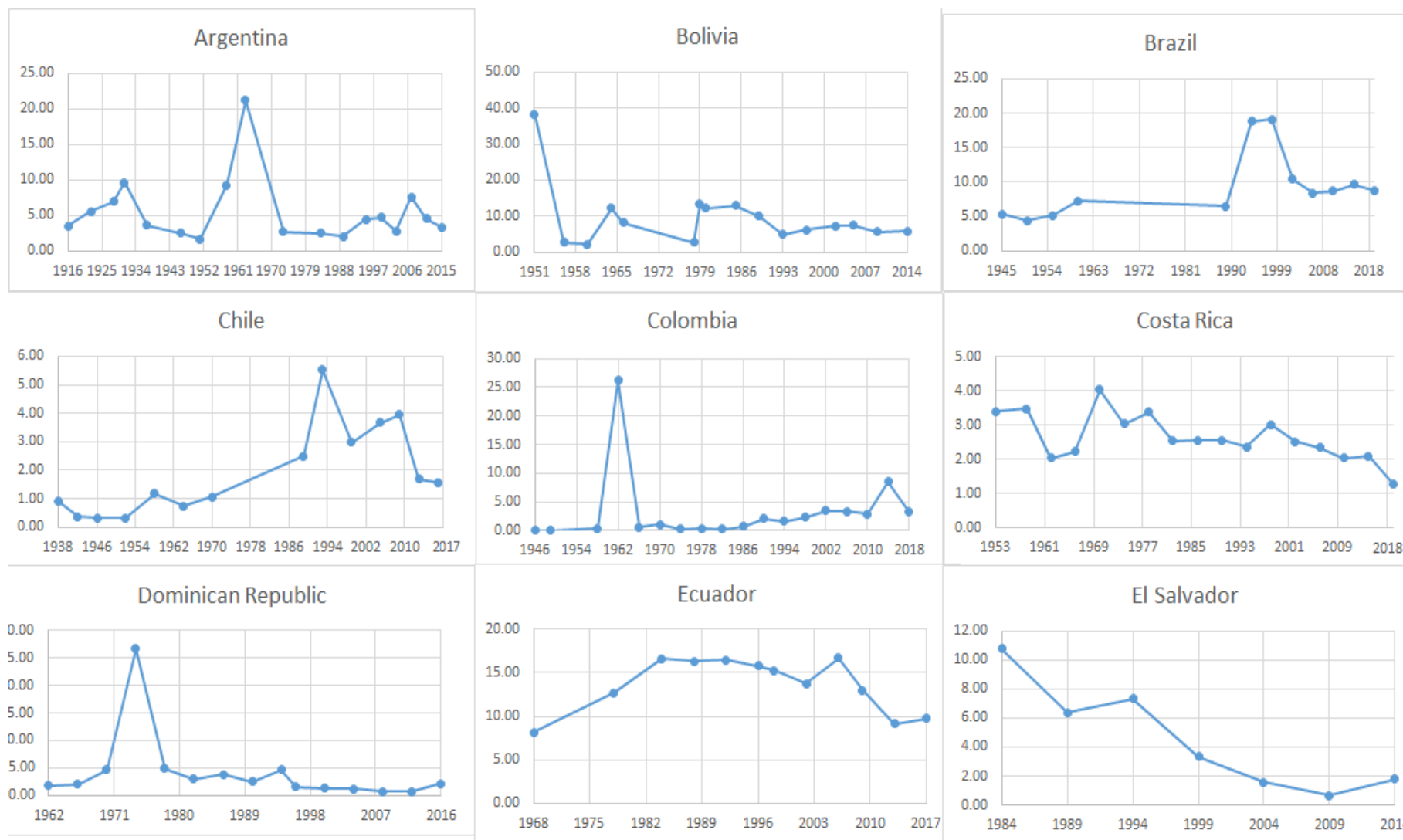
### 4.1 Invalid Voting in Latin America

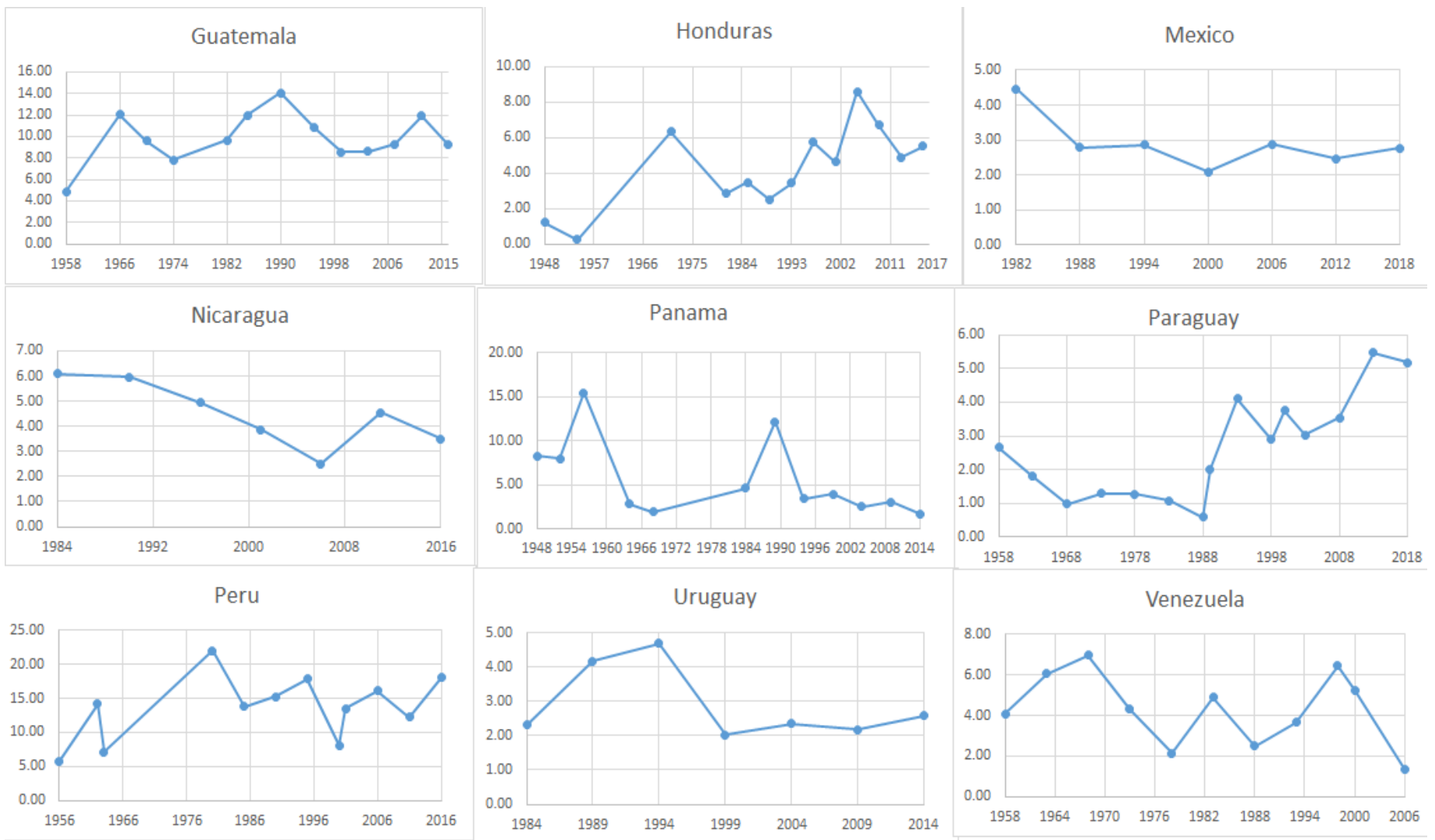
Over the past decades, mass popular uprisings, the resignation of presidents, populist governments, failed attempts at coups d'état, fraudulent elections, high rates of corruption, among others, have drawn the political panorama in Latin America. Despite the role played by "the third wave" in re-establishing democracy with a well-institutionalized representative election, many citizens have preferred a "candidate without a name," a null or blank option as a representation of their preferences.

Invalid vote has become the centerpiece of these citizens' protest. As shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6, we see an alarmingly increasing in invalid vote in some of the Latin American electoral processes either in the presidential election (like Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, and Paraguay) or in Lower chamber election (like Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru).



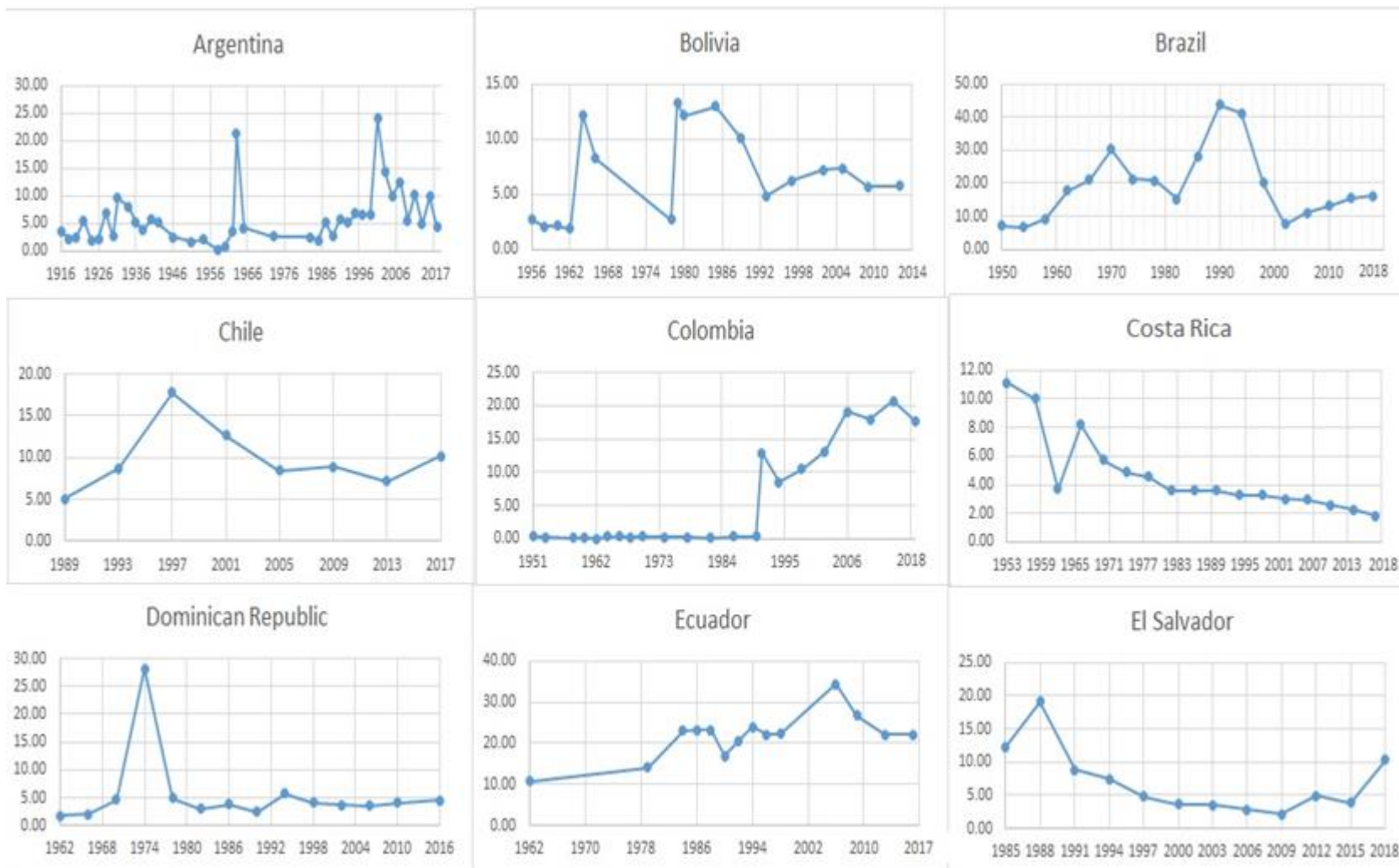
**Figure 5: Percentage of Invalid Vote in presidential elections in Latin America**

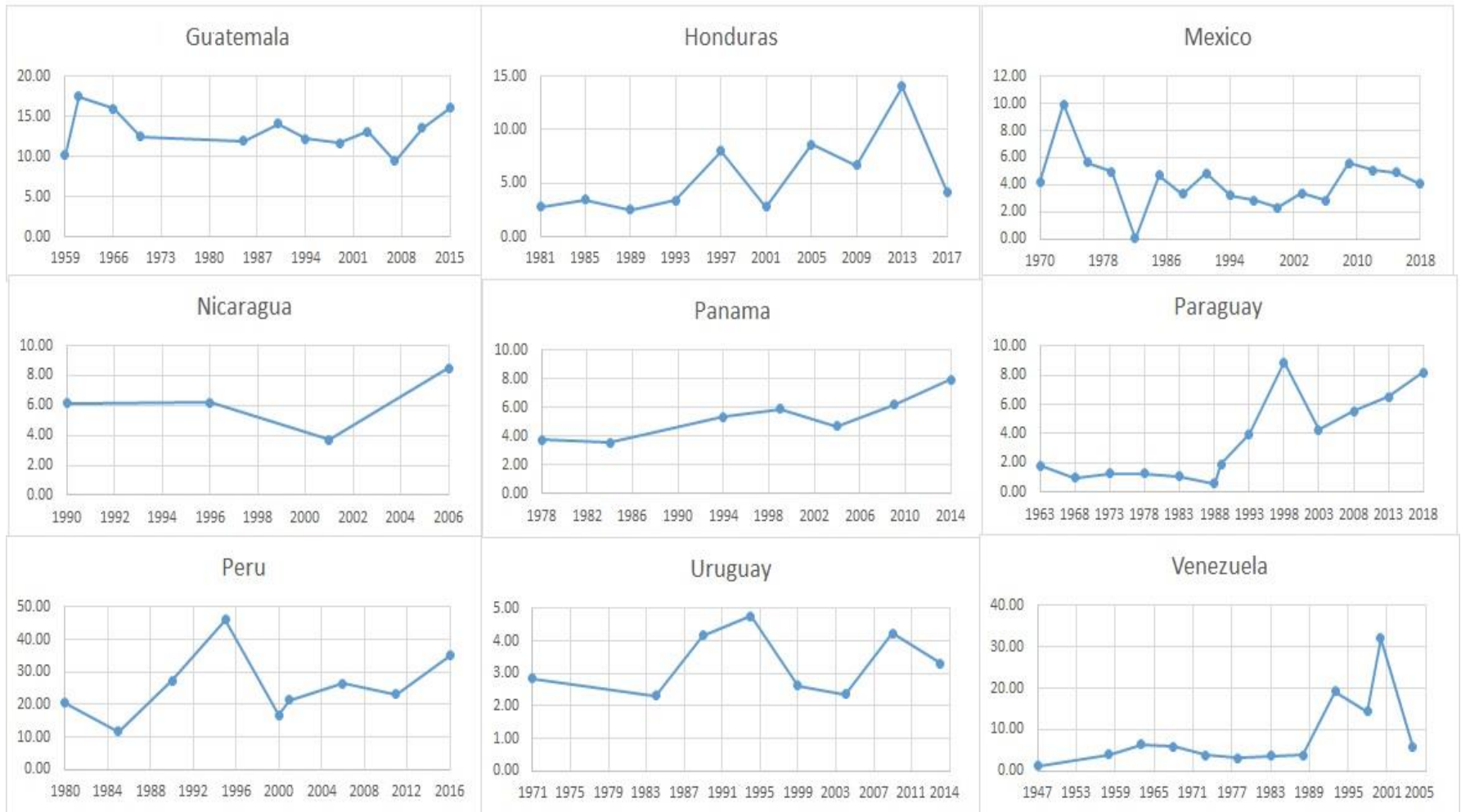




Source: Author. Data are from Nohlen (2005a; 2005b) and International IDEA (2019).

**Figure 6: Percentage of Invalid Vote in Lower Chamber elections in Latin America**





Source: Author. Data are from Nohlen (2005a; 2005b) and International IDEA (2019).

Relatedly, since the re-democratization of Latin America, countries had survived at all under the stress of several reforms from authoritarian practices and political scandals. Many of these new regimes showed great optimism in the implementation of new measures of legitimizing power while ensuring a wider range of democratic functions. Increasing citizen's competence and participation in the electoral process were some of them.

Precisely, the reality is that in the region today, several factors seem to affect the proportion of voters that cast invalid ballots. In this vein, I test hypotheses regarding compulsory voting systems, concurrent elections, economic development and performance, educational attainment, level of democracy, and corruption on invalid voting. Existing works on the invalid voting in Latin America have focused on some of these factors (e.g. Cohen 2018; Martinez I Coma and Werner 2018; Power and Garand 2007; Ugglá 2008); however, not all of them cover a large dataset combining the qualities of cross-sectional with time-series data from presidential (first round) and lower chamber elections and invalid voting campaigns, which is what I will do in the next section.

## **4.2 Empirical Results**

Tables 5 shows the empirical results for the tests of my six hypotheses for Latin American presidential elections from 1916 to 2018. As can be seen, the results in Model 1 (OLS) and Model 2 (PCSE) are largely similar. Regarding the tests of the institutional hypotheses, I find that the coefficient of enforced compulsory voting system is positive and statistically significant. This finding suggests that invalid voting tends to be higher in countries with enforced compulsory voting system, which is similar to the results of previous studies (Martinez I Coma and Werner 2018; Power and Garand 2007). Substantively, this finding suggests that compared to a country with voluntary voting system, the invalid voting rates in the presidential elections is 3.9% higher for a country with enforced compulsory system.

**Table 5. Results for Model of Invalid Voting in Latin America Presidential elections**

<b>Explanatory Variables</b>	<b>Model 1 (Ordinary Least Squares (OLS))</b>	<b>Model 2 (Panel-Corrected Standard Error (PCSE))</b>
Unenforced compulsory voting system (H1)	-1.734 (1.127)	-1.734* (0.971)
Enforced compulsory voting system (H1)	3.893*** (1.282)	3.893*** (1.143)
Concurrent Elections (H2)	2.413*** (0.888)	2.413** (1.141)
Logged per capita GDP (H3)	0.361 (0.759)	0.362 (1.533)
GDP growth (H3)	-9.618* (5.753)	-9.618 (7.686)
Educational attainment (H4)	-0.265 (0.229)	-0.265 (0.425)
Level of democracy (H5)	-0.016 (0.869)	-0.016 (0.070)
Regime corruption (H6)	3.422*** (1.141)	3.422** (1.607)
Founding elections	-0.546 (1.218)	-0.545 (1.602)
Constant	0.5653 (6.486)	0.565 (11.695)
Observations (N)	221	221
R-Squared	0.214	0.214

Notes: Voluntary voting system is the reference category for voting systems. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

In addition, the coefficient for the concurrent elections is also positive and statistically significant. Substantively, the finding suggests that compared to a country that holds presidential election and lower chamber election on different dates, the invalid voting rates in the presidential elections is 2.4% higher for a country that holds presidential election and lower chamber election

on the same date. This result is similar to Kouba and Lysek's (2016) analysis. Third, my results show that the coefficient for the regime corruption is positive and statistically significant, suggesting that voters in a country with a higher level of regime corruption tends to cast more invalid votes in the presidential elections. Theoretically, this finding might indicate that voters tend to cast invalid votes as a mean of protest against the corrupt government. In short, my analyses provide strong support for H1, H2, and H6.

As for other explanatory variables, Table 5 shows mixed results for unenforced compulsory voting system and GDP growth. The coefficient of unenforced compulsory voting system is negative in Model 1 and Model 2, but it only reaches statistical significance for the Model 2 ( $p=0.074$ ) but not Model 1. A t-test shows that the coefficients of this variable in both models are not significantly different from one another. Moreover, the coefficient of GDP growth is negative in both Model 1 and Model 2, suggesting that a country might have a lower level of invalid votes if the economic performance is better. However, the coefficient of GDP growth reaches statistical significance for the Model 1 ( $p=0.096$ ) but not Model 2. A t-test shows that the coefficients of GDP growth in both models are not significantly different from one another. This result suggests that in Latin America, poor economic performances might not drive popular discontent to cast invalid votes for presidential elections.

Surprisingly, other explanatory variables do not have statistically significant effects on invalid votes in my sample of presidential election. Contrary to theoretical expectation, the coefficient of per capita GDP is positive, suggesting that a country with a higher level of economic development tends to have a higher level of invalid voting rates. However, the coefficient of this variable is not statistically significant. On this point, a probable explanation can be discussed. As Martins (2017) says that, people with economic hardships, who still want to vote, are more likely to spoil their vote as a way to manifest their discontent regarding the government's policies; however, this is not unrelated to the fact that there may be little participation of the poor and the unemployed in the elections, who often exhibit a strong decline in their ability to take part in politics and, of course, it is not reflected in the percentage of invalid votes.

Educational attainment has a coefficient that fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Contrary to Power and Garand (2007), that rejects the idea that in Latin America, a higher level of education might turn out a lower rate of invalid votes. One possible answer to explain this lack of correlation between education and invalid votes is given in that educational levels might be related to two different types of invalid voters, one with a strong political dissatisfaction and intentionally spoil the ballots and the other who does not have enough voting skills or is misinformed about politics and unintentionally spoil the vote. Moreover, for Models 1 and 2, the level of democracy is negatively correlated with invalid votes. However, the effect of democracy is not statistically significant, suggesting that the effect is no different from zero. This finding shows that the relationship between the level of democracy and invalid voting might be rather complicated. Last, I find that invalid voting rates are not particularly high or low in founding election. In short, the results provide no statistically significant support for H3, H4, and H5.

In Table 6, I demonstrate the statistical results about lower chamber elections. The results in Model 3 and Model 4 are similar. Consistent with the findings for the presidential elections, I find that countries that adopt enforced compulsory voting system tend to have higher levels of invalid vote than countries that adopt voluntary voting system. Moreover, the results indicate that invalid voting rates tend to be higher in countries that suffer from higher levels of regime corruption.

**Table 6. Results for Model of Invalid Voting in Latin America lower chamber elections**

<b>Explanatory Variables</b>	<b>Model 3 (Ordinary Least Squares (OLS))</b>	<b>Model 4 (Panel-Corrected Standard Error (PCSE))</b>
Unenforced compulsory voting system (H1)	-3.357*** (1.242)	-3.357*** (1.051)
Enforced compulsory voting system (H1)	8.107*** (1.665)	8.107*** (1.448)
Concurrent Elections (H2)	-0.724 (1.050)	-0.724 (0.967)



Logged per capita GDP (H3)	3.262*** (1.232)	3.262*** (1.238)
GDP growth (H3)	-0.908 (9.521)	-0.908 (7.818)
Educational attainment (H4)	-0.057 (0.360)	-0.572 (0.291)
Level of democracy (H5)	0.055 (0.088)	0.055 (0.078)
Regime corruption (H6)	7.043*** (1.838)	7.043*** (1.932)
Founding elections	-0.328 (1.490)	-0.328 (1.408)
Constant	-24.099** (9.646)	-24.099** (10.183)
Observations (N)	249	249
R-Squared	0.308	0.308

Notes: standard errors are in parentheses.

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Interestingly, for lower chamber elections, the results show that the coefficient for unenforced compulsory voting system is negative and statistically significant. This finding suggests that countries that adopt unforced compulsory voting systems are more likely to have lower levels of invalid voting rates than countries that adopt voluntary voting system. In addition, the coefficient for per capita GDP is positive and statistically significant. This finding suggests that countries with higher levels of economic development tend to have higher levels of invalid vote. In short, the analyses of lower chamber elections provide strong support for H1, H3, and H6.

Regarding other explanatory variables, I find that the coefficient for concurrent elections is negative and statistically insignificant. Similarly, the coefficients for GDP growth and educational attainment are also negative and statistically insignificant. The coefficient for the level of democracy is positive, but it does not reach statistical significance. Last, consistent with what I have found for the presidential elections, founding election does not have a strong impact on invalid votes. In other words, there is not sufficient evidence that first free and democratic

elections after the end of authoritarian power tended to have lower invalid vote rates. In short, the empirical results provide no statistically significant support for H2, H4, and H5.

To better understand whether different explanatory variables have different impacts on invalid voting in presidential elections and lower chamber elections, I conduct t-tests for comparing coefficients for variables that have statistically significant coefficient in either Model 1 or Model 3, or both.

Table 7. Consistency of Results for Presidential Elections and Lower Chamber Elections

Explanatory Variables	Presidential Elections	Lower Chamber Elections	T-Test Statistic
Unenforced compulsory voting system (H1)	Insignificant	Significant	0.968
Enforced compulsory voting system (H1)	Significant	Significant	<b>2.005</b>
Concurrent Elections (H2)	Significant	Insignificant	<b>3.483</b>
Logged per capita GDP (H3)	Insignificant	Significant	<b>-2.005</b>
Regime corruption (H6)	Significant	Significant	<b>-1.674</b>

Note: The T-test statistic must have an absolute value of at least 1.96 to be significant at  $p < 0.05$  and of at least 1.65 to be at  $p < 0.10$ .

As can be seen in Table 7, the difference in the coefficients for three explanatory variables is statistically significant for presidential elections and lower chamber elections. First, while a country with enforced compulsory voting system tends to have higher levels of invalid vote for both presidential elections and lower chamber elections, the T-test shows that the difference in the effects of this type of voting system is statistically significant. In other words, a country with an enforced compulsory voting system tends to have higher levels of invalid vote for lower chamber elections than presidential elections. In this scenario, when voters are mandated to go to the polls while facing heavy penalties imposed if they do not vote, the next step is to think for whom to vote. Presidential elections often focus more attention than legislative elections (Monroy 2012), perhaps due to the excessive presence of the presidential figure in the political history of Latin America and the general perception of Latinos that the country's politics depend

fundamentally on the President and not of deputies. Therefore, the idea of electing a presidential candidate is probably greater and the percentage of invalid votes is reduced, while it might be the opposite effect for lower chamber elections.

The T-test statistic for comparing coefficients in regime corruption exhibit similar results. Specifically, the results show that while the level of regime corruption has a positive effect on increasing invalid votes, such effect is stronger for lower chamber elections than presidential elections. A possible explanation for this argument is due to the fact that the generalized perception of Latinos towards the corruption of diverse political and social actors, falls mainly on the figure of parliamentarians, as noted by Corporación Latinobarómetro (2018) in which "51% of Latin Americans believe that "all or almost all" parliamentarians are involved in acts of corruption", while 50% fell on the presidential figure.

Table 7 also shows interesting T-test statistics for concurrent elections and level of economic development. I find that the differences in coefficients of concurrent elections and per capita GDP for presidential elections and lower chamber elections are statistically significant. Taking into account the results in Model 1 and Model 3, the finding suggests that concurrent elections tend to increase invalid vote for presidential elections but not for lower chamber elections. Moreover, the finding suggests that a higher level of economic development tends to increase invalid vote for lower chamber elections but not for presidential elections. Last, although the results in Model 1 and Model 3 show that the coefficient of unenforced compulsory voting system is statistically significant for lower chamber elections but statistically insignificant for presidential elections, the T-test statistic shows that the difference is not statistically significant.

#### **4.3 Robustness Check**

To check whether the results in Table 5 and Table 6 are robust, I conduct robustness checks by employing trimmed models, which include only variables that have statistically significant coefficients. Table 8 summarizes the tests for checking the robustness of my main findings for presidential and lower chamber elections. In both Models, the enforced compulsory voting for both presidential and lower chamber elections seems to be a highly significant

predictor of the invalid vote. In other words, when citizens are legally obliged to vote in both elections, the level of the invalid vote dramatically increases.

**Table 8. Robustness Checks**

<b>Explanatory Variables</b>	<b>Model 5 (Trimmed Presidential Elections)</b>	<b>Model 6 (Trimmed Lower Chamber Elections)</b>
Unenforced compulsory voting system (H1)		-3.62917*** (1.081425)
Enforced compulsory voting system (H1)	4.73568*** (0.7408269)	7.865675*** (1.54493)
Concurrent Elections (H2)	1.626117** (0.7630619)	
Logged per capita GDP (H3)		3.330107*** (0.7610819)
Regime corruption (H6)	3.745836*** (1.085971)	6.752196*** (1.761934)
Constant	1.048964 (0.8874)	-24.53059*** (6.883785)
Observations (N)	226	249
R-Squared	0.1933	0.3070

Notes: standard errors are in parentheses.

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Models 5 and 6 both show that the level of corruption significantly and sharply increases the level of invalid voting for presidential and lower chamber contests. Corruption reveals a weak and inefficient allocation of public goods. Indeed, anti-corruption feelings in Latin America have grown over the last years, as citizens experience diverse ways of how corruption undermines the integrity and legitimacy of the political system (Corporación Latinobarómetro 2018). Expressing their dissatisfaction and distrust against their governments who are unable or unwilling to fight against this disease, electors decide to show their voice in a null or blank ballot in protest.

Last, for lower chamber elections, the unenforced compulsory voting system is associated with lower levels of invalid vote, and a higher level of economic development is associated with higher levels of invalid vote. For presidential elections, the results show that concurrent elections tend to increase invalid vote. In short, the robustness checks show that my main findings are robust across different models.



## Chapter Five: Qualitative Analysis

From the quantitative analyses in the previous chapter, we observe that two variables stand out to have consistent results for both presidential and lower chamber elections: enforced compulsory voting system and regime corruption. Because the effect of regime corruption on invalid vote is less studied, I conduct comparative case studies to further examine how regime corruption affect the level of invalid vote. I argue that the invalid vote campaign movements with the anti-corruption cause are an important mechanism that links voters' perception of regime corruption and their voting behavior. Due to the limitation of time and capability for conducting systematic qualitative research, I limit my research scope on presidential and lower chamber elections in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru from 1999 to 2019. In this chapter, I first discuss invalid vote campaign movements in presidential and lower chamber elections for the countries mentioned above. In the third section, I analyze to what extent these campaigns were able to encourage more invalid vote. Moreover, I conduct t-test to analyze the relationship between invalid vote campaign with the anti-corruption cause and invalid vote.

Studies have shown that invalid vote campaign movements might have three kinds of causes, including a general dissatisfaction toward the entire political class (Bartlett 2012), a disagreement with the performance of political institutions (Cisneros 2012), and rejection for all candidates on the ballot (Sonnleitner 2019). These social movements- understood as popular organizations that without the intention of entering the government are oriented against the existing political structures (Fennema 2005)- encourage voters to go to the polls and cast an invalid vote as a way of exerting pressure on the politicians and changing the current state of affairs.

Moreover, a call to annul votes in elections not only depends on the social movement itself but also on who is in its leadership. Leaders have played a strategic role in the fight and resistance against the political regimes of the governments. Many of them are among the most

influential actors on the political scene, such as former presidents, members of Congress, politicians, artists, and writers. In the invalid vote campaigns, they try to promote the annulment of the vote and foster feelings of discontent among voters (Cohen 2016). In this sense, the invalidate vote campaign seems to have become a latent and hidden political force. A social movement that emerges sporadically and is fed by currents of opinion. An alternative, mainly in Latin America, for those disillusioned with politics and its leaders, by making citizen rejection of the partisan offer visible through the void or annul of ballots so that traditional politicians will assimilate this message and renew their ideas (Sonnleitner 2019).

The influence of an invalid voting movement on voting behavior could have a significant public impact. Therefore, addressing this issue enhances the understanding of voting studies. Next, I present qualitative analyses for various null/blank vote campaigns for presidential and lower chamber elections in Latin America.

## **5.1 Invalid Vote Campaigns for Presidential Elections**

### **5.1.1 Argentina**

D'Adamo and García (2003) detailed that during the first months of Argentina's 2003 presidential elections, voters showed almost no interest in the electoral process. The particular context in which these elections were held was characterized by an institutional crisis and impunity for acts of corruption, in a democratic regime that only revealed a lack of legitimacy for anyone who took up the reins of government (Rimondini and Raffaele 2006).

As a new sample of the discontent among citizens, diverse organizations began to distribute ballots with the slogan "a vote to not vote" for any candidate (El Universo 2003). Neighborhood assemblies and large groups of unemployed workers in Argentina also printed ballots with the same popular motto of 2001's legislative elections "Que se vayan todos" (everyone must leave) who demanded that the country's leaders leave their positions (Marcarian 2003). One of these organizations called "Manifiesto Argentino" (Argentine Manifesto) was led by Mempo Giardinelli, a famous Argentine novelist and academic who won the 1993 Rómulo Gallegos Prize (El Universo 2003). According to the newspaper El Universo (2003), Mempo

Giardinelli and other intellectuals promoted the protest vote against Menem and Kirchner, and other candidates in Presidential elections.

During the 2003's electoral contest, public opinion polls predicted that the average percentage of invalid votes would be lower than in the 2001's elections (Mendelevich 2003). Among the reasons for decreased levels of "voto bronca," Rodríguez (2003) explained that, generally, presidential elections promote higher turnout; besides, the experience of 2001 did not have the effect of renewing politics; on the contrary, it allowed the candidates to exhibit better performances of the ones that had. Therefore, in comparison with previous elections, the bitterness towards the political class did not translate into a high proportion of invalid votes in the official result of Argentina's 2003 presidential election, as feared.

On the other side, Argentina's 2015 presidential elections were held amid economic recession and political instability, security challenges, corruption, education crisis, and others (El Pais 2015). Against this backdrop, citizens went to the polls and set the stage for the second presidential round between Mauricio Macri and Daniel Scioli.

For the presidential runoff, diverse politicians emerged who promoted the casting of invalid ballots. Among them, the former candidate for the Left and the Workers' Front, Nicolás del Caño, called to cast a blank ballot as an opposition to the political agenda of Mauricio Macri and Daniel Scioli (La Izquierda Diario 2015). Likewise, the Workers' Party launched a campaign to encourage voters to cast an invalid vote under the slogan "vote blank or nulled your vote" (Pura Ciudad 2015).

Finally, in the run-off election in November 2015, Argentines went again to the polls and elected to the former mayor of Buenos Aires, Mauricio Macri. In a close race, Macri took 51.3% of the vote compared to 48.6% for Scioli, while 1.18% of voters cast a blank ballot and 1.28% spoiled their ballot (Dirección Nacional de Argentina 2015). After the result, where the invalid vote narrowly prevailed in the second round, Nicolás Del Caño justified that citizens did not follow his calling for a blank or null vote based on the logic of the "lesser evil" (Left Voice 2015).



### **5.1.2 Bolivia**

In 2019, Bolivians participated in general elections amid widespread outrage over because of the Supreme Court of Justice gave Morales the green light to run for a fourth straight term after overruling the Constitution and scrapping term limits for every office (Blair 2017). Before this election, as a result of the referendum held in February 2016, Bolivians rejected a constitutional amendment that would have allowed Morales to run for another term in the 2019 presidential elections (BBC News 2016a); however, such result was not respected by him, as feared.

In response, rallies, protests, marches, and other expressions of popular resistance from citizens were seen in the Bolivian streets as "Resistance against the dictatorship" (BBC News 2019a). During that electoral process, voters responded to calls by the opposition to cast invalid ballots to protest Morales (Sanchez Berzain 2019). Likewise, public opinion polls revealed that 11 percent of Bolivians were willing to null or blank their votes in the first round (La Voz 2019)

After published results, with a narrow win of 47.07% for Evo Morales (Collyns 2019) and around 5% to invalid votes, Bolivians erupted in violent protests in several cities when the main opposition candidate, Carlos Mesa, rejected electoral results (BBC News 2019b). Carlos Mesa, former Bolivian president, denounced that general results released by election authorities were a "fraud," accusing Evo Morales of colluding with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to tweak delayed results and avoid a run-off (Agence France-Presse 2019).

### **5.1.3 Brazil**

Corruption was the central theme of Brazilian's 2006 general elections where accusations of bribery and use of undisclosed funds for campaign expenditures involved top party and governing officials in one of the most famous cases called the Mensalão or Big Monthly Stipend (Rennó 2008). This great corruption scandal involved directly with the president of the Workers' Party (PT), Ricardo Berzoini, and the PT candidate for the São Paulo government, Aloísio Mercadante (Rennó 2007), as well as Oswaldo Bargas, manager of the Lula campaign; and Jorge Lorenzetti, risk and media analyst of the Lula campaign (Fundação Perseus Abramo 2006).

Since then, groups and influential individuals led campaigns to encourage protest voting. Some campaigns sprung up on the mass media as the commercial produced by MTV, of the Abril Group, that qualified the electoral campaign on TV as "useless and lying" (Weissheimer 2006). Meanwhile, the popular website of political and social issues called Centro de Mídia Independente (CMI) allowed internauts to discuss on mobilizations of both blank and null voting (Segurado 2009). Also, through Twitter, Facebook, or the popular Orkut site (in Brazil), voters were informed on how to spoil their ballots during elections (Guerreiro 2006).

Moreover, Dinho Ouro Preto, one of Brazil's best-known artists, encouraged citizens to annul their votes to protest the current generation of politicians, saying that "I see so much frustration and I think that annulling the vote is an expression of that. It would be good for Brazilian democracy (for them) to see the dimension of dissatisfaction" (Downie 2006). Although charges of corruption plagued the 2006 general election, Brazilian voters headed to the polls twice (for the first and second round) to choose, in landslide re-election victory in a run-off vote, to Lula da Silva (Rohter 2006). Although the invalid votes rate was not as high as last year, Rennó's study (2007) suggested that those electors who preferred to spoil their ballots were influenced by multiple corruption scandals from the Lula da Silva's Workers' Party.

Political disappointment arose during the Brazilian's 2010 general elections after accusations of corruption in the Worker's Party that shook Dilma Rousseff's campaign. Allegations were published in *Veja* magazine that Israel Guerra, the son of Lula's chief of staff Erenice Guerra, had asked money from companies to arrange government contracts and loans which ended up with the Guerra's resignation (Council on Hemispheric Affairs 2010). Although Rousseff was not directly related to the corruption scandal, Serra's campaign played the guilt by association card Guerra-Rousseff (Elizondo 2010).

In reaction to such events, there was a flood of campaigns promoted the annulment of voting, particularly in the runoff between Dilma Rousseff and José Serra. In this regard, the ex-presidential candidate for the Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (Party for Socialism and Freedom), Plínio de Arruda Sampaio, declared his preference for the null vote as the only correct position at this time (Carvalho 2010). In words of Plínio, "I propose a null vote because I believe that what

is important in the electoral campaign on the left is conscience. And in this case, I need to inform the mass that none of the candidates provides a solution under any circumstances" (Rossi 2010). Adding, "I'm going to vote null, me and many of us here. I will give the null vote in respect of those who voted for me. For those who voted for me, I will say: my vote will be null" (Pasini 2010). Throughout his invalid vote campaign, in the runoff, Plínio de Arruda hammered ruling party candidate Dilma Rousseff and the other candidate José Serra, however, he failed to land any decisive blows because of Rousseff led ahead of the runoff vote.

A massive corruption scandal at state-run oil company Petrobras took the 2014 general elections. An investigation called Operation Car Wash evidenced that Brazil's biggest construction firms overcharged Petrobras for building contracts and that, part of their windfall was delivered to Petrobras executives and politicians who were involved in it (BBC News 2016b). Likewise, BBC News (2006b) added that prosecutors alleged that Rousseff's Workers' Party partly financed its campaigns with kickbacks and that some of her high-ranking politicians had been convicted over the scandal while Rousseff denied had been implicated in it. In this context, the company's former director of refining and supply, Paulo Roberto Costa, stated that there was an institutionalized bribery system in Petrobras, the Brazilian state-controlled oil company and that the Workers' Party had pocketed between 1% and 3% of all contracts (Jimenez 2014).

Voters dissatisfied and disillusioned with the political landscape launched null vote campaigns on social media in protest against the elections (Vitor 2014). The president of the Regional Electoral Court of Paraná, Edson Vidal Pinto, called "desserviço" those internet campaigns in favor of the null vote which he sees as a form of protest voting capable of influencing the outcome of the elections (Gonçalves 2014). Maria Cristina Fernandes, the political editor of the newspaper Valor, expressed that campaign for the Null or blank voting is an interesting phenomenon, increased by the June 2013's demonstrations (Nogueira da Costa 2014) where null vote was encouraged as a protest against current government and politicians (Roberto 2013). As a result of the 2010 presidential elections in the first round, the percentage of invalid votes was higher than in past elections, which would probably reveal a disinterest of the population for politics, according to Agência Brasil (2014).

Several corruption scandals such as Operation Car Wash, Petrobras y Odebrecht, the impeachment in 2016 of ex-President Dilma Rousseff, severe allegations of bribery against Michel Temer, the conviction of Lula Da Silva on corruption and money laundering charges, and others overshadowed Brazil and the general elections in 2018 (BBC News 2018).

In this context, Brazilian's 2018 general elections showed a high rate of voter dissatisfaction who turned to the blank or null ballot papers as a signal of protest with the regime (Dearo 2018). As in previous elections, the invalid vote campaigns were promoted through social networks (Santos 2018) that even the government stated that, on election day, voters' campaigns for the null or blank vote would be subject to punishment as well as any different propaganda (ClickPB 2018). Likewise, around Brazil, there were various mobilizations in supporting the null vote like Rede Libertária da Baixada Santista in Santos, the Local Anarchist Front in Curitiba as well as other groups in Tatuí, Salvador, Porto Alegre, São Paulo, Fortaleza, Pelotas among countless other cities, as manifested by the Agência de Notícias Anarquistas (2018). At the end of the runoff, the percentage of invalid votes was high with an increase of 60% over the last election (Grandin et al. 2018).

#### **5.1.4 Chile**

In the second round of the 1999 Chilean presidential election, according to Cohen (2016), candidates from the Humanist Party called to cast blank or spoiled ballots in protest against candidates Ricardo Lagos and Joaquín Lavín, citing their ineffective or incompetent political leadership.

In the second round of the 2005 Chilean presidential elections, various social movements such as The Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front and Chile's Movement of the Revolutionary Left as well as Tomás Hirsch, presidential candidate of "the Together We Can Make More Pact" called voters to invalidate their ballots and condemn Michelle Bachelet and Sebastián Piñera as opposition to the proposed neoliberal economic model (Centro de Estudios Miguel Enrique 2005; Kaos en la Red 2006).

Another clear example of the invalid vote campaign also appeared in the second round of the 2009 Chilean presidential elections with various groups, mainly The Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front group. This social movement came to oppose to Sebastián Piñera and Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle by the proposed neoliberal economic model (Centro de Estudios Miguel Enrique 2005; Socialist World 2009).

### **5.1.5 Colombia**

Colombia's presidential election in 2014 was one of the most closely-fought contests in the country's history. The electoral process turned mainly on whether and how the Colombian government should negotiate with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC for its acronym in Spanish) and future visions for the country's peace (Wallace 2014). Moreover, during the election month, corruption allegations arose that involved two of the top contenders Juan Manuel Santos and Oscar Iván Zuluaga (Glickhouse 2014). As allegations of bribery from a drug trafficker to Santos' campaign strategist and hacking scandal intended to obstruct peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia by Zuluaga's campaign chief (Glickhouse 2014).

Amid this context, diverse groups emerged, which encouraged voters to cast a null/blank vote, particularly in the runoff such as the Revolutionary Independent Labour Movement, who decided not to support any of the candidates and to promote abstention or a blank vote (Colprensa 2014). Likewise, Senator Jorge Enrique Robledo and Alexander López y Wilson Arias promoted an invalid voting campaign in opposition to presidential candidates, Juan Manuel Santos and Óscar Iván Zuluaga since both candidates were poorly qualified to hold the presidency (Bermudez 2014).

The 2018 Colombia presidential elections have been rocked by major corruption scandals. It was unveiled that the Brazilian construction company paid bribes to diverse Colombian politicians like the former president Juan Manuel Santos who confessed to taking Odebrecht funds for his 2010 and 2014 campaigns (Grattan 2018). Likewise, the misuses of funds for a school food program as well as Colombia's top anti-corruption official, Luis Gustavo Moreno, who was arrested on US charges of money laundering for alleged bribery were some issues that outraged

voters before the second round (Grattan 2018). In the midst of these corruption cases that undermined the Colombian country, the director of the Transparency International premises in Colombia pointed out that the two candidates who advanced to the second round, Gustavo Petro or Iván Duque, remained free of corruption allegations (Grattan 2018).

During the second round of the 2018 Colombia presidential elections, ex-presidential candidates Humberto de la Calle and Sergio Fajardo announced that they would cast a blank ballot like many voters who didn't support for any of the two candidates, arguing that Petro and Duque do not represent their views (CNN Español 2018). Both of them were "too extreme," not only from the opposite sides of the politic but also regarding the implementation of the peace process with FARC while keeping Colombia's most orthodox economic model (Grattan and Murphy 2018).

#### **5.1.6 Costa Rica**

Given the political, social, and economic crisis, the first round of the Costa Rican presidential election in 2018 was held in the midst of presumed fraud and corruption scandals such as the so-called "cementazo", or about social issues like sexual preferences or from LGBTI groups (Weisleder 2018). This affected the first round and opened up a second-round with Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz and Carlos Alvarado Quesada.

During the second round of the 2018 Costa Rican presidential election, there had been a deliberate campaign for the "null vote" promoted by Jhon Vega, ex-presidential candidate for the Workers' Party (Pérez 2018) who stated that "Our call is to cast a vote null against both presidential candidates, which will undoubtedly try to unload the fiscal crisis on the backs of the working class" (Chinchilla 2018). He also mentioned that either Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz or Carlos Alvarado Quesada would hurt working classes to collect the financial crisis with programs that defend the interests of large businesses and a system that guarantees oppression, exploitation, and injustice (Elmundo.cr 2018). Likewise, diverse groups called for street protests, encouraging Costa Ricans to spoil their ballots in the runoff because of corruption scandals as the cementazo

case, injustices against the working class, and others (Liga Internacional de Los Trabajadores Cuarta Internacional 2018).

### **5.1.7 Ecuador**

The Ecuadorian electoral process of 2002 was characterized by strong voter apathy and disillusionment with political parties due to the lack of strong leaders to address massive economic and social demands (General Secretariat of the Organization of American States 2004). According to the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (2004), diverse movements and political figures emerged, using powerful speech against corruption and the “old” style of politics. Carlos Aguinaga, president of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal expressed concern about the massive null vote movements promoted on the internet and Media for the runoff and said that "promoting the null vote threatens democracy and the political system" (La Hora 2002a).

For the runoff, the former Ecuadorian president, Rodrigo Borja Cevallos, and the mayor of Guayaquil, Jaime Nebot, announced his support for the null/blank vote in opposition to the two presidential candidates, arguing that Lucio Gutiérrez and Álvaro Noboa are poorly qualified to hold the presidency since they do not inspire any confidence about a good government, besides their government programs were not clearly exposed during the electoral campaign (La Hora 2002b).

Eight presidential candidates faced off in Ecuador's 2017 Presidential Elections, and one popular initiative proposed to deny everyone the vote. Political Movement Organization, Production, and Development led by the Ecuadorian economist, Jorge Cedeño López, encouraged voters to cast a null vote as an expression of protest, rejection, and punishment against the same political class that rules the country (Politica 2017) which campaign has had an impact in the mass media in Ecuador (Santos 2017). Likewise, Santos (2017) mentioned that the Cedeño campaign and the other null vote campaigns on the internet or social networks with messages #YoVotoNulo (I vote null) and #TachaTuPapeleta (Scratch your ballot) have had a great role in this first electoral process of 2017.

### **5.1.8 Guatemala**

The null vote was one of the most famous slogans during the electoral process in 2015. The electoral context in 2015 was surrounded by complaints from the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala. The Public Ministry identified and dismantled acts of corruption, influence peddling, and illicit enrichment committed by the highest authorities in the country. At the same time, a call for marches and demonstrations by a wide range of sectors in Guatemala took the streets (Mas Poder Local 2015).

Throughout the 2015 Guatemala presidential elections, various deliberate campaigns for the “null vote” were widely seen in the Media and social networks (Flacso 2015). Likewise, that environment enabled much wider dissemination beyond acts of corruption. It also focused on the unqualified capacities of candidates on assuming office as President-elect so that many of these social organizations demanded to postpone or suspend the electoral process (Flacso 2015).

### **5.1.9 Mexico**

Corruption and organized crime threatened the 2012 Mexican presidential election. According to Ribando (2012), the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was criticized for corruption scandals and for allowing organized crime to operate relatively freely in the country. In response to this scenery, some citizens led massive campaigns to encourage protest voting such as "EllosNoNosRepresentan" or "Todos están reprobados" (CNN Mexico 2012a). And the Mexican poet, essayist, novelist, Javier Sicilia who led multiple public demonstrations and protests through an initiative called the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity (Justice in Mexico 2012). He opinioned that all candidates lacked a political and economic agenda that promoted "peace and development" in Mexico (CNN Mexico 2012b).

### **5.1.10 Peru**

At the end of the second Fujimori's government (1995-2000), Peru faced one of the greatest crises of democracy in its history. A controversial interpretation by Congress passed the law of "Authentic Interpretation" of the 1993 Constitution which allowed to Fujimori to stand for his "first reelection" for the year 2000, with the argument that his first presidential term had



been ruled by the 1979 Constitution and not that of 1993; however, its heaviest confrontation appeared with the judges of The Constitutional Court who declared that the law of "Authentic Interpretation" was inapplicable (Tanaka 2006). After that, the congressional majority voted to impeach and remove the three magistrates who declared "inapplicable" that Law (Schmidt 2000). Likewise, Tanaka (2006) explained that after the reform of the National Elections Board members, Fujimori took control over this organization to endorse his reelection. Finally, the path of Fujimori's reelection was free from any opposition challenges for the 2000 electoral process, with a population very skeptical about voting again for the incumbent government (Schmidt 2000). In this way, the 2000 presidential election took place amid a climate of corruption and abuse of power charges that favored the Fujimori's campaign (Committee on International Relations 2001).

The 2000 primary general elections resulted in the confrontation, in a second-round, between Alberto Fujimori Fujimori and Alejandro Toledo Manrique. During this second electoral process, Alejandro Toledo refused to participate, saying it was pointless running in unfair elections (Bellos 2000). Facing this fraud and an unfair electoral context, Toledo urged Peruvians to boycott or invalid their ballots in the runoff elections (Tran 2000). According to the official results, invalid votes jumped from 8.1% in the total votes cast in the first round to 31.1% of total votes in the second round (Nohlen 2005b). Notwithstanding those circumstances, Fujimori took the presidency, but it was short-lived.

The second round of Peru's presidential election of 2001. After the collapse of Alberto Fujimori's authoritarian regime in 2000, a fresh ballot organized in 2001 brought Peru back to the democratic world. Peru's 2001 presidential elections marked an enormous contrast with last year's electoral process which was manipulated by Alberto Fujimori for his third re-election as president. These new elections were held in Peru on 8 April 2001 and as a final result, Peru got 36.51 percent; APRA 25.78 percent; Unidad Nacional 24.3 percent; FIM 9.85 percent; while other political parties received less than 2 percent each (United States Department of State 2002); and since no candidate received more than 50 percent of the votes, Alejandro Toledo and Alan Garcia advanced to the second round.

During that presidential run-off election, Peruvian polling firms reported an unusually high proportion of poll respondents (around 30 percent at the national level and 40 percent in the capital) who would choose to spoil their ballots in the next elections (Organization of American States 2002) in a signal of dissatisfaction with current governmental institutions (Puertas 2001) and, mainly, to express the rejection toward electoral candidates (La Nacion 2001).

This phenomenon was the result largely of a campaign initiated anonymously through the Internet (Organization of American States 2002) as well as influential persons, such as the campaign started by journalists Jaime Bayly and Alvaro Vargas Llosa in late April 2001. In the middle of a press conference, Vargas Llosa, son of Nobel Prize in Literature Mario Vargas Llosa and ex-adviser of former president Alejandro Toledo, and Jaime Bayly, a famous novelist, and journalist launched a campaign promoting the blank vote. In that conference, they appealed to the voter to cast a spoiled ballot since, for them, Toledo and García lacked ethical conduct to assume responsibility for the government (Zenit 2001); they even compared that the choice between Mr. Toledo and Mr. García is like "the dilemma of choosing between the electric chair and the gas chamber" (Krauss 2001). Vargas Llosa also argued that "we cannot run the risk of electing someone we cannot trust the presidency." (Lama 2001).

However, the great expectation of reaching a high percent of the null vote collapsed. Two weeks before the elections, the polling firms predicted a high preference for the null vote (around 35 percent) but the reality was different when the ONPE reported the final results of the second-round presidential election, where a blank and null votes reached 13.81 percent (National Democratic Institute/Carter Center 2001), highest than reached in the first round with a 13.56 percent (Organization of American States 2002).

The second round of the 2011 Peruvian elections was not the exception to the massive mobilization for the invalid vote. Through social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, many people have expressed their support for the null vote or "voto viciado" (Herrera 2011), considering that not one candidate (Keiko Sofia Fujimori and Ollanta Humala) represents a viable option for their country.

The second round of the 2016 Peruvian elections brought a massive campaign for a null vote or "voto viciado". People were "fed up" with both pro-business candidates, Keiko Fujimori, daughter of the jailed former president, and centrist economist Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (Scollo and Traj 2016).

In the streets of Peru, the citizen protest was not long in coming. Supporters from the left called electors to cast a null vote to show not one candidate represents a viable option to change the real situation of the country (LaMula.pe 2016a). That political climate was surrounded by high levels of corruption, the failure of public investment, extreme poverty, low confidence in public institutions, particularly in the legislative and the Judiciary branch, and others (Santander 2016). Amid this conflict, the former presidential candidate of "Frente Amplio," Verónica Mendoza, spelled out her voting for both candidates are ruled out as well her political party will be "The opposition" (LaMula.pe 2016b).

## 5.2. Lower Chamber elections

### 5.2.1. Argentina

During the electoral legislative process of 2001, the campaigns supporting the ballots spoilage reached such magnitude that the press described the phenomenon as the "voto bronca" or protest vote (Epstein and Pion-Berlin 2006).

The Argentine people came to the elections during a severe crisis, both political and economic. According to Herrero (2013), a rumor circulated that senators had received substantial bribes in exchange for their favorable vote on the labor reform proposed by Executive during the 2001 elections. This news shook De la Rúa's government and, more so when Vicepresident Carlos Alvarez resigned as a protest of the corruption scandal (Lettieri 2012).

The political crisis was aggravated in the context of acute economic depression and financial bankruptcy (Salvia 2015), as well as the high unemployment rate and inequality (Adlatina 2001). Public anger ensued and further eroded the people's belief in elections as an effective mechanism of political accountability (Peruzzotti 2006).

The discrediting of the public institutions and the inability of some political leaders to honestly govern, triggered the calling of abstention and annulment of votes during the electoral campaign, by the citizens, through the internet and social media (Silletta 2005). The one initiated by Clarin and the Nation Newspaper Groups, through its pages, instigated the exercise of "voto bronca" (Lettieri 2012; Llorens 2015).

According to the Clarin newspaper, the null vote movement was a great success (Clarin 2001; Lettiere 2012). The protest vote ranked in the second position at the national level with approximately 24 percent (Salvia 2015), while in Federal Capital, Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Santa Fe were the option most voted by citizens (Zicari 2014). In this way, the "voto bronca" was the protagonist of the 2001 legislative elections. Million Argentines preferred not to choose any candidate but to spoil their ballots as a criticism of the political system, particularly on the political elites, aggravated by the increase in corruption (Telechea 2010) and the economic crisis (Lettieri 2012; Salvia 2015).

Finally, this remarkable event was a hard blow against Fernando de la Rúa's government, whose breakdown came two months later with his resignation from the office (Zicari 2014).

### **5.2.2. Colombia**

The blank/null vote in Colombia implies more than simply cast a ballot in protest. In the 2014 Colombian parliamentary elections, invalid voting movements were led by Colombian celebrities and groups such as the screenwriter and journalist, Gustavo Bolívar, and the professor from Colombia national university, Daniel Libreros Caicedo as well as the Coalition of Social Movements and Organizations of Colombia and the Socialist Workers Party (Suárez 2014). According to Semana (2014), there were many Colombians who didn't feel identified with the alternatives at stake while the lack of credibility in stable institutional structures had been accentuated, favoring this punishment vote for politicians and political parties.

### **5.2.3. Ecuador**

In the 2006 legislative elections amid corruption allegations among the traditional political parties in Ecuador who controlled to the National Congress, the ex-president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa encouraged people to cast a null vote as a demonstration of rejection of that partidocracia (patriarchy) while his political party called "Alianza Pais" (PAIS Alliance) refused to launch congressional candidates as a measure to abolish that institution (Machado 2007).

In Lucero Bolaños's opinion, ex-president of Ecuador's National Congress, that invalid vote campaign didn't achieve its objective of delegitimizing the National Congress, who considered that movement as undemocratic and destabilizing a democratic system (Ecuadorinmediato 2006).

### **5.2.4. El Salvador**

The only way to protest against El Salvador's 2015 Legislative process is to cast a blank, or null vote affirmed the Central American Socialist Party (PSOCA for its acronym in Spanish) and various political and social organizations. They called people to support that campaign because, in their opinion, no candidate or party represented the interests of the workers, peasants, indigenous people, students, and others (Centro de Medios Independientes 2015).

There is a general sense of dissatisfaction with the political class in EL Salvador (Wade 2018). In fact, in the 2018 Salvadoran legislative election, Nayib Bukele, the current president and a former mayor of El Salvador's capital, promoted a campaign to encourage voters to cast an invalid ballot (El Salvador Times 2018), receiving positive support by other politicians. After the launch of this social movement, another strong campaign on social networks was released to promote the null/blank vote in the population (El Salvador Times 2018). With the result in hand, the proportion of invalid votes for the legislative contest in 2015 was exceeded by three times.

### **5.2.5. Mexico**

A mass movement of spoiled votes appeared across election campaigns in the 2009 midterm federal elections in Mexico. Before 2009, the null-vote was few that even legislators

considered it as insignificant and unnecessary without any influence in the tally. However, during the 2009 deputies' elections, diverse groups emerged simultaneously to promote invalid voting as a way to protest against Mexican politicians (Crespo 2010).

These movements led by intellectuals, business people, and student groups did not have structures, central organizations, or financing (Crespo 2010). The only thing that united all organizations was the same conviction that annulling the vote would show discontent for the political class (Cisneros 2012; Lara 2015) and against the parties' candidate in the elections (Langston 2018). In words of Ellingwood (2009), disenchanted voters charged politicians for failing to address corruption, organized crime, a sclerotic school system, poverty, and economic crisis.

According to Cisneros (2012), 49 groups were registered in no less than 20 Mexican states, while in social networks, 250 Facebook groups were associated with the campaign for the null votes (Alonso 2010). The presence of these groups on the electoral process created various debates in the media that made the National Electoral Institute proposed a public debate to hear the opinions of the promoters of the null vote (Alonso 2010).

As a result of this political clamor, more than 5 percent of people "annulled" their ballots, a higher percentage than those obtained by the political parties: PT, PANAL, Convergence, and PSD (Zamitiz 2010). According to Lara (2015), the null vote mobilization was so successful that, after the 2009 elections, the former President Felipe Calderón called to dialogue with the leaders of the movement to discuss and work together to settle the issues.

Most studies agree that the invalid vote movement in the electoral process of 2009 did have a considerable impact on several Mexican cities. After this campaign, according to Sanchez (2016), the null-vote became a customary power of protest of the citizenry, creating a precedent in the next Mexican electoral processes (Cisneros 2012).

In the 2015 Mexican federal election, there had been a campaign for the null vote led by Mexican intellectuals and writers, Denise Dresser and José Antonio Crespo, who was convinced that it's better not to vote for anyone than to vote for someone (Reina 2015). Although the

variation of the invalid vote in this electoral process has been lower than in the previous election of 2009, some supporters of invalid vote mentioned that the null vote had won over four political parties nationwide (Reina 2015).

### 5.3 Comparative Analyses

Table 9 shows the features of invalid vote campaigns in Latin America presidential elections from 1999 to 2019. I identify 21 invalid vote mobilizations in ten countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru. The comparison shows that 8 (38%) out of the 21 movements were successful, which means that these movements were able to increase of invalid votes between elections. The comparison in Table 9 also shows that most of the invalid voting mobilizations champion for the anti-corruption cause (12 out of 21 cases) as well as those electoral processes were regulated by an enforced compulsory voting system (16 out of 21 cases). Likewise, the presidential election and lower chamber elections were held concurrently in 8 out of 21 studied cases; however, it didn't happen in any of the runoff cases.

Additionally, the majority of the successful cases occurred in the second round of the electoral process. A tentative explanation is that there's a lot at stake in a runoff than in a first-round election, especially when voters are not satisfied with the existing political parties or the traditional political elite, which often run for a second-round vote. That is arguable since, in general, the probability that any candidate will win the first round is relatively low, which decreases the opportunity of emergence invalid vote campaigns. However, in a straight runoff contest between the two highest vote winners where one of them must win, the potential costs of arising mobilizations for invalid vote likely increase when there is strong opposition against both candidates. As the well-known Brazilian politician, Enéas Ferreira Carneiro, emphasized during the second round of the 1989 Brazilian presidential election, "if there is no one [candidate] that I like, I will vote null" (Moura and Ramos 2018).

Table 9. Invalid Vote Campaigns in Latin America Presidential Elections (1999-2019)

Country	Year	Election Round	Compulsory voting system	Concurrent Elections*	Main Justification for the Campaign	Leadership	Result: Invalid vote increase?
Argentina	2003	Single	Yes/Enforced	Yes	Institutional crisis and corruption	Various groups/ Influential individuals	No
Argentina	2015	Second	Yes/Enforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Economic instability, security challenges, corruption, education crisis	Various groups/Political Party/ Influential individuals	No
Bolivia	2019	Single	Yes/Enforced	Yes	Reelection after overruling the constitution	Various groups	No**
Brazil	2006	First	Yes/Enforced	Yes	Corruption	Various groups/ Influential individuals	No
Brazil	2010	Second	Yes/Enforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Corruption	Various groups/ Influential individuals	No
Brazil	2014	First	Yes/Enforced	Yes	Corruption	Various groups	Yes
Brazil	2018	First	Yes/Enforced	Yes	Corruption	Various groups	No



Chile	1999	Second	Yes/ Enforced	First round/No Second round/No	Candidate quality	Various Groups	No
Chile	2005	Second	Yes/ Enforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Opposition to economic model	Various groups/ Influential individuals	Yes
Chile	2009	Second	Yes/ Enforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Opposition to the economic model	Various Groups	No
Colombia	2014	First	No	No	Corruption/Negotiation FARC	Various groups / Influential individuals	Yes
Colombia	2018	Second	No	First round/No Second round/No	Implementation of process peace (FARC)/ Opposition to economic model	Influential individuals	Yes
Costa Rica	2018	Second	Yes/ Unenforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Corruption/Opposition to the political agenda	Various groups/ Influential individuals	No
Ecuador	2002	Second	Yes/ Enforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Candidate quality	Influential individuals	No
Ecuador	2017	First	Yes/ Enforced	Yes	Dissatisfaction with Political class	Influential individuals	Yes
Guatemala	2015	First	No	Yes	Corruption, influence peddling, and illicit enrichment	Various Groups	No

Mexico	2012	Single	Yes/ Unenforced	Yes	Corruption /discontent with traditional political parties/ Opposition to the political agenda	Various groups/ Influential individuals	No
Peru	2000	Second	Yes/ Enforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Corruption/Reelection after overruling the constitution	Influential individuals	Yes
Peru	2001	Second	Yes/ Enforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Candidate quality	Various groups/ Influential individuals	Yes
Peru	2011	Second	Yes/ Enforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Candidate quality	Various groups	No
Peru	2016	Second	Yes/ Enforced	First round/Yes Second round/No	Corruption/Candidate quality	Various groups	Yes

Notes: \* In this study, concurrent elections just involve when presidential and lower chamber election were held on the same date.

\*\* Allegations of fraud in counting votes (BBC News 2019c)

Table 10 displays the features of invalid vote campaigns in Latin America lower chamber elections from 2001 to 2018. Identify seven invalid vote campaign movements in five countries, including Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Mexico. As shown in Table 10, the majority of the invalid vote campaigns in lower chamber elections were successful. Specifically, 5 out of 7 invalid vote campaigns have encouraged an increase of invalid votes. Besides, 4 out of 7 invalid voting cases were held under a compulsory voting system, and only one studied case (Ecuador) was in a concurrent election. Interestingly, there are only three campaigns that champion the cause for combating corrupt politicians, and all of them were held with mandatory voting laws. Over half of the campaigns were mobilized for expressing dissatisfaction with the political class.



**Table 10. Invalid Vote Campaigns in Latin America Lower Chamber Elections (2001-2018)**

Country	Year	Election Round	Compulsory voting system	Concurrent Elections*	Main Justification for the Campaign	Leadership	Result: Invalid vote increase?
Argentina	2001	Single	Yes/ Enforced	No	Corruption, economic depression, and financial bankruptcy, inequality, and high unemployment rate	Various groups	Yes
Colombia	2014	Single	No	No	Lack of credibility	Various groups/ Influential individuals	Yes
Ecuador	2006	Single	Yes/ Enforced	Yes	Corruption/ traditional political parties	Influential individuals	Yes
El Salvador	2015	Single	No	No	Lack of representation/ Dissatisfaction with Political class	Various groups	No
El Salvador	2018	Single	No	No	Dissatisfaction with political class	Influential individuals	Yes
Mexico	2009	Single	Yes/ Unenforced	No	Dissatisfaction with political class, corruption, poverty, organized crime, a sclerotic school system, and economic crisis	Various groups/ Influential individuals	Yes
Mexico	2015	Single	Yes/ Unenforced	No	Dissatisfaction with political class	Influential individuals	No

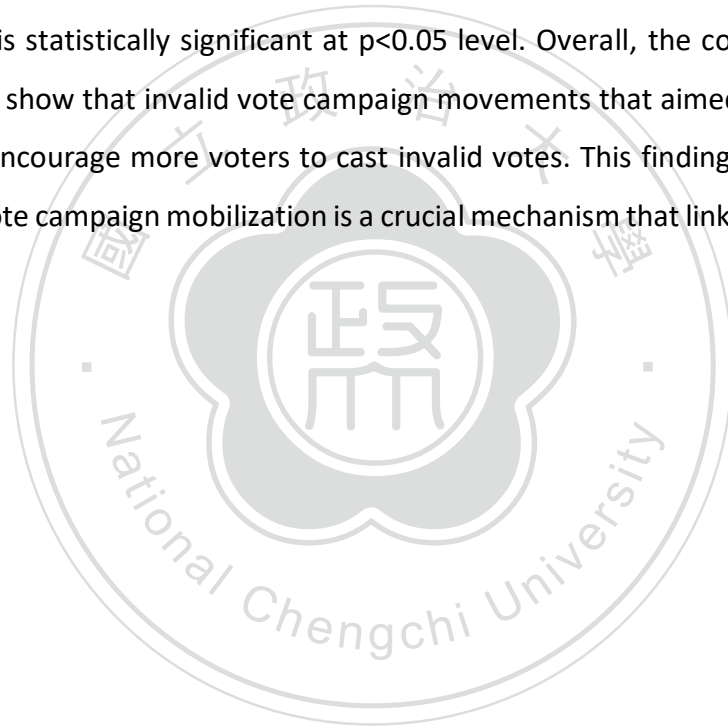
\* In this study, concurrent elections just involve when presidential and lower chamber election were held on the same date.

The comparative analyses in Table 9 and Table 10 depict different pictures for invalid vote campaigns and their outcomes. While invalid vote campaigns might have different causes, my qualitative analyses suggest that the campaigns with the anti-corruption cause might matter more. To examine the effect of anti-corruption invalid vote campaigns, I conduct t-tests to analyze the relationship between anti-corruption invalid vote campaigns and the level of invalid vote (my original dependent variable). I did not include the campaign movement variable in the statistical models in the previous chapter largely because of insufficient number of cases, which would reduce the number of observations to the extent that would make estimation problematic. Therefore, I choose to conduct t-tests as an alternative strategy for comparative analysis.

**Table 11. T-Tests for Anti-Corruption Invalid Vote Campaigns and Levels of Invalid Vote**

Election Type	Group	Number of Observations	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation
Presidential	Without Anti-Corruption Invalid Vote Campaigns	34	6.275	0.751	4.379
Presidential	With Anti-Corruption Invalid Vote Campaigns	8	9.504	1.995	5.643
diff = mean(0) - mean(1); t = -1.7762 Ho: diff = 0; degrees of freedom = 40 Ha: diff < 0; Pr(T < t) = 0.0417 Ha: diff != 0; Pr( T  >  t ) = 0.0833 Ha: diff > 0; Pr(T > t) = 0.9583					
Lower Chamber	Without Anti-Corruption Invalid Vote Campaigns	43	10.324	1.146	7.512
Lower Chamber	With Anti-Corruption Invalid Vote Campaigns	12	15.898	3.010	10.426
diff = mean(0) - mean(1); t = -2.0812 Ho: diff = 0; degrees of freedom = 53 Ha: diff < 0; Pr(T < t) = 0.0211 Ha: diff != 0; Pr( T  >  t ) = 0.0423 Ha: diff > 0; Pr(T > t) = 0.9789					

Table 11 shows the results of the t-tests. For the presidential elections, there are 42 cases in total, with 8 of them having anti-corruption invalid vote campaigns before the first-round election. The mean of invalid vote for the cases with anti-corruption invalid vote campaign movements is 9.5%, and the mean of invalid vote for the cases without anti-corruption invalid vote campaign movements is 6.3%. The t-test shows that the difference is statistically significant at  $p < 0.1$  level. For the lower chamber elections, there are 55 cases in total, with 12 of them having anti-corruption invalid vote campaigns before the election. The mean of invalid vote for the cases with anti-corruption invalid vote campaign movements is 15.9%, and the mean of invalid vote for the cases without anti-corruption invalid vote campaign movements is 10.3%. The t-test shows that the difference is statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  level. Overall, the comparative analyses based on the t-tests show that invalid vote campaign movements that aimed to protest corrupt politicians tend to encourage more voters to cast invalid votes. This finding suggests that anti-corruption invalid vote campaign mobilization is a crucial mechanism that links regime corruption and invalid vote.



## Chapter Six: Conclusion

### 6.1 Research Summary

Many scholars consider the invalid vote as a "citizens protest," which reflects voters' discontent toward parties and political institutions. The option for the null vote ends up becoming an act of passivity under the current political scenario. It is crucial to study the phenomenon of invalid vote because such voting behavior might undermine the process of representative democracy.

This thesis examines what explains the variation in invalid votes in new democracies by adopting a mixed-method approach. Using data for presidential (first round) elections and lower chamber elections in Latin America from 1916 to 2018, I empirically test the variables regarding institutional framework, socioeconomic characteristics, and political context. Regarding the quantitative study, for Latin American presidential elections from 1916 to 2018, I found that the coefficient of enforced compulsory voting system is positive and statistically significant while it is negative for an unenforced compulsory voting system (H1). Moreover, concurrent presidential and lower chamber elections will yield an increase in invalid voting rates (H2); in other words, presidential elections are being affected by a simultaneous celebration with lower chamber elections. Besides, the coefficient for regime corruption is also positive and statistically significant (H6), i.e., the perception of regime corruption by voter increase the probability of casting an invalid vote for presidential elections. This latter is supported widely with the findings from the qualitative research, which shows the presence of corrupt practices as the main grievance of voters. Conversely, results show that poor economic performance (H3), low educational attainment (H4), and a low level of democracy (H5) might not influence increasing invalid votes for presidential elections in Latin America.

Concerning Latin American lower chamber elections from 1916 to 2018, Table 6 shows that countries with unforced compulsory voting systems tend to decrease the levels of invalid voting rates than countries that adopt voluntary voting system (H1). While the coefficient for per

capita GDP is positive and statistically significant (H3), i.e., countries with higher levels of economic development, voters tend to cast an invalid vote. Besides, the coefficient for regime corruption is also positive and statistically significant (H6), suggesting that a country with the highest levels of corruption tends to increase invalid vote rates than countries with lower levels of corruption for lower chamber elections. Also, the empirical results provide no statistically significant support for concurrent elections (H2), educational attainment (H4), and level of democracy (H5).

A further comparative analysis based on t-tests demonstrates that different variables have different impacts on invalid vote for different elections. The analyses suggest four main findings. First, a country with an enforced compulsory voting system tends to have more invalid vote for lower chamber elections than presidential elections. Second, while the level of regime corruption has a positive effect on increasing invalid votes, such an effect is stronger for lower chamber elections than presidential elections. Third, when a country holds presidential elections and lower chamber elections concurrently, invalid vote tends to be higher for presidential elections but not for lower chamber elections. Fourth, a country with a higher level of economic development tends to have more invalid vote for lower chamber elections; in contrast, economic development does not have a strong impact on presidential elections.

The qualitative analyses based on comparative case studies suggest interesting findings regarding how invalid vote campaigns work. Recently, democratic setbacks have been defined by massive mobilization to promote the null vote across Latin America. Based on case studies in presidential and lower chamber elections, I find that the presence of corruption, low candidate quality, dissatisfaction with the political class, and opposition to the economic model, provide the underlying motives and conditions for these movements. However, among these different factors, I find that the invalid vote campaign movements with the anti-corruption cause are important mechanism that links regime corruption with invalid vote.

On the other hand, leaders are intrinsic to the success of social movements because they offer a host of attributes critical to attracting other adherents and therefore wield influence on the campaign's trajectory. Looking at our successful cases in Argentina (2001), Brazil (2014), Chile



(2005), Colombia (2014 and 2018), Ecuador (2006 and 2017), El Salvador (2018), Mexico (2009) and Peru (2000, 2001 and 2016), prominent leaders emerged in those campaigns such as novelists, politicians, journalists, or, ex-presidential candidates.

## 6.2 Policy Implication

Null vote campaigns in Latin America is a complex phenomenon. Many factors appear to promote the emergence of invalid vote movements, and many of these are inter-related. Influential individuals or social movements advocating to cast a null or blank vote may exert a real impact on electoral politics. Such campaigns become major vehicles for social and political change across Latin American countries. While attention in these campaigns is widely being focused on short-term effects, particularly about the result of each election, it is also essential to keep an eye on the long-term consequences such as the risk of protests and violence.

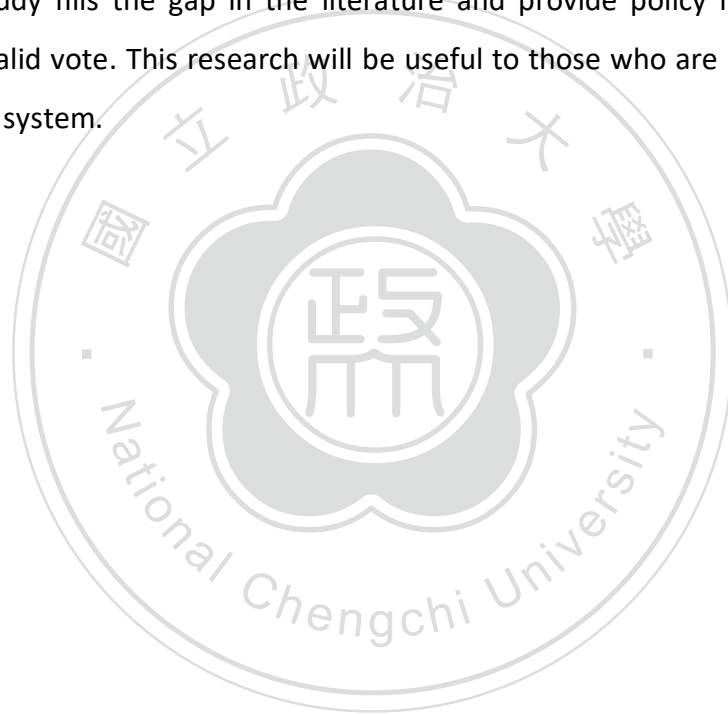
Clearly, in this last century, the general dissatisfaction and features of the political context shape voters' attitudes to cast invalid votes. During the presidential and lower chamber elections in Latin America, high rates of invalid vote and various campaigns that are promoting the annulment of the vote, have caused a common concern among scholars and political leaders as potential resources to weaken the authority of electoral mandates and undermine governance for elected leaders. Therefore, to reduce the number of invalid votes, one policy option for Latin countries is to put in place strong institutions to boost citizen confidence. Starting from an electoral process legitimate, transparent, and accountable manner, as is expected of democracy, will increase the public confidence in electoral and political processes.

Invalid ballots might come from a deliberately spoiled vote or occur accidentally. To avoid the latter, electoral processes should be designed to be as user-friendly as it is practicable to encourage and facilitate voters to choose for their preferred candidates without generating any unnecessary confusion. Besides, the government should also provide voters with necessary information about participating in elections, through civic and voter education.

Last, one interesting finding in my empirical results suggests that countries that adopt enforced compulsory voting systems tend to have more invalid vote in both presidential elections

and lower chamber elections, and the effects are quite strong. It seems that there is a tradeoff between demanding citizens to participate in voting and the increase of invalid vote. However, my analyses also show that a country that adopts an unenforced compulsory voting system is more likely to have a lower level of invalid vote, compared to a country that adopts a voluntary voting system. Therefore, one policy implication of this finding suggests that countries might consider reforming their voting system to be unenforced compulsory voting systems for reducing invalid vote effectively.

Overall, this thesis has identified possible causal factors affecting invalid votes. More importantly, this study fills the gap in the literature and provide policy implications for the phenomenon of invalid vote. This research will be useful to those who are interested in voting behavior and voting system.



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