

Tenuous Pacts and Multiparty Coalitions:
The Politics of Impeachment in Latin America*

David De Micheli⁺
Center for Inter-American
Policy and Research
Tulane University

Jose T. Sanchez Gomez
Department of Government
Cornell University

Kenneth M. Roberts
Department of Government
Cornell University

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Abstract

When and why do legislatures impeach presidents? We analyze a recent wave of instability in Latin America and contend that coalitional politics is central to understanding presidential impeachment. Presidents in Latin America often govern with multiparty and ideologically heterogeneous coalitions that are built on and sustained by tenuous pacts. When political conditions sour, impeachment threats emerge and coalitions are tested. Presidents are likely to survive threats when coalitional pacts are sustained, preventing congressional allies from resorting to impeachment in acts of opportunism, self-preservation, or retaliation. We test this argument with comparative process-tracing analysis of six possible cases of impeachment in Paraguay, Brazil, and Peru. This analysis draws attention to the centrality of the intricate and contingent dynamics of intra-coalitional politics as a proximate cause of presidential impeachment, above and beyond more generic challenges associated with economic crises or political scandals, partisan composition of legislatures, mass social protest, or legal malfeasance.

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⁺ Corresponding author. Mailing address: Center for Inter-American Policy & Research, 205 Richardson Building, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118. Phone: (914) 572-8443. Email: ddemicheli@tulane.edu.

In 2012, Paraguayan president Fernando Lugo was removed from office in lightning-quick impeachment proceedings. Lugo had been grappling with political fallout from a violent police eviction of peasants occupying a landed estate in the countryside. The incident had grown into a scandal, but few held Lugo personally responsible, and he faced no broad-based social protests or public demand for his ouster. Moreover, since his election in 2008, Lugo had governed with a legislative coalition sizable enough to shield him from threats of impeachment. Yet in a span of less than 24 hours, impeachment proceedings were opened and closed in the legislature, led by Lugo's erstwhile coalitional allies.

Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff met a similar fate in 2016. Unlike Lugo, however, Rousseff was removed in a context that seemed ripe for impeachment. With revelations of a massive corruption scheme implicating her party and other members of the political establishment paired with a severe economic downturn, Brazil had become engulfed in turmoil. Public approval for Rousseff plummeted, and conservative protesters mobilized in massive numbers to demand her removal. Yet even as public outrage reached fever pitch, Rousseff's coalitional allies in congress, who neither belonged to her party nor shared her party's left-of-center ideology, rebuffed initial demands for her impeachment from protesters and politicians alike. Indeed, Rousseff seemed to be one of the few prominent politicians who faced no credible allegations of corruption, unlike many politicians who supported her impeachment. After nearly 18 months of instability, however, Rousseff's coalition partners in the legislature moved suddenly and swiftly to remove her and install the allegedly corrupt vice-president from an allied party.

Striking in these cases is that presidents were impeached not by antagonistic legislatures, nor simply in response to popular demands. Instead, sitting presidents seemingly protected by their legislative coalitions were abandoned by their allies, who joined opposition forces in supporting

articles of impeachment. On paper, legislatures are endowed with impeachment powers as constitutional and legal mechanisms of horizontal accountability. But in practice, of course, impeachments are highly political acts.

Conventional explanations in the literature on presidential failures attribute the phenomenon to crisis or scandal, mass public protest, and the absence of a legislative majority held by the president's party or coalition. We contend, however, that intra-coalitional politics is central to understanding if, when, and why legislatures remove presidents from office. While the factors highlighted in current literature can certainly threaten any presidency, we argue that impeachments hinge on more contingent political alignments and calculations tied to the unraveling of tactical alliances forged among multiple actors. In Latin America's fragmented party systems, presidents rarely command legislative majorities and often rely on multiparty and ideologically heterogeneous coalitions built on and sustained by tenuous pacts. Rather than a function of legal wrongdoing, poor performance on the part of the president, or the partisan composition of the legislature, we see impeachments as a more proximate function of coalition management and cohesion: shifting political conditions, such as crisis or scandal, can alter strategic calculations and incentives in ways that unsettle coalitions constructed among strange political bedfellows. Presidents who effectively manage their coalitions, however, can prevent legislative allies from removing them in acts of political opportunism, self-preservation, or retaliation.

The cases of Lugo in Paraguay and Rousseff in Brazil introduce two examples of how coalition allies resorted to impeachment when they felt presidents reneged on tacit commitments to protect the interests of their allies. To evaluate our causal propositions, we leverage comparisons of these and two additional presidents—Rousseff's successor Michel Temer in Brazil and Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in Peru—in which embattled presidents faced serious impeachment threats that

they narrowly avoided (temporarily, in Kuczynski's case). Unlike previous studies, which tend to conduct qualitative analysis by selecting cases on the dependent variable, we employ a case selection strategy that allows for valid inferences into causal processes. As a result, our analyses highlight that, when looking behind impeachment proceedings and the public rationales offered by legislators, it becomes strikingly clear how the conventional factors identified in previous scholarship do not account sufficiently for divergent outcomes of presidential failure and impeachment. Ultimately, our analysis casts impeachments as a symptom of the fragility of "coalitional presidencies,"¹ in which the constitutional lever of impeachment can be wielded as a routinized instrument of partisan, factional, or personal advantage, essentially becoming an institutional surrogate for parliamentary votes of no-confidence.

This article contributes most directly to theorizing on presidential failure by offering a new causal explanation for presidential impeachments. Additionally, this study also contributes to the burgeoning scholarship on coalitional presidentialism, demonstrating the potential for a broader analytical and theoretical scope in the study of this informal institution. First, our analysis inverts the direction of causality by treating coalitional presidentialism as a central *independent* variable. In this way, our analysis takes up recent calls to pay greater attention to coalitional presidentialism and links the institution to outcomes broadly relevant to democratic institutions and stability. Second, while the coalitional presidentialism literature has coalesced around an agenda that seeks to understand coalition formation and management as a mechanism underpinning democratic endurance, our analysis draws attention to mechanisms of coalitional *unraveling* and its consequences for political stability, horizontal accountability, and the functioning of democratic institutions beyond questions of regime survival. Ultimately, our analysis sheds new theoretical

¹ Paul Chaisty, Nic Cheeseman, and Timothy J. Power, *Coalitional Presidentialism in Comparative Perspective: Minority Presidents in Multiparty Systems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

light on the causes of presidential failure and raises questions about whether legislative behavior surrounding presidential impeachment serves as a *democratic* mechanism of accountability, or as a tool for strategic and self-interested political elites.

CRISIS, OUTRAGE, AND MINORITY PRESIDENTS

While cloaked in the language and formal proceedings of constitutional legality, presidential impeachments are necessarily political acts. The politics of impeachment has indeed been central to the growing literature on interrupted presidencies and political instability, which attributes presidential downfalls to a confluence of factors: crisis or scandal provoked by presidential wrongdoing or poor performance; the mobilization of public opinion and protest; or the vulnerability of a president whose party holds a minority of seats in the legislature. Hochstetler and Edwards, for example, find that presidencies are likely to fail when presidents are mired in scandal, face public backlash in the form of protest, and lack partisan support in the legislature.² Pérez-Liñán similarly emphasizes the importance of the president's "legislative shield," as well as the role of the media, in mobilizing public outrage over scandals.³ This literature has focused on Latin America due to the prevalence of presidentialism and presidential interruptions, but these findings have found cross-regional support.⁴

What is clear from previous literature is that certain factors give rise to the risk of impeachment for any president. But what remains unclear is whether these are direct and independent causes of impeachment, or antecedent and facilitating "background" conditions. This

² Kathryn Hochstetler, "Rethinking Presidentialism: Challenges and Presidential Falls in South America," *Comparative Politics* 38, no. 4 (2006): 401–18; Margaret E. Edwards, "Understanding Presidential Failure in South America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 57, no. 2 (2015): 111–31.

³ Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment and the New Political Instability in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴ Young Hun Kim and Donna Bahry, "Interrupted Presidencies in Third Wave Democracies," *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 3 (2008): 807–22.

is particularly true regarding economic crises, political scandals, and mass protest. Given the common stipulation that impeachment be reserved for “high crimes and misdemeanors,” legislatures are obligated to at least provide a legal rationale for impeachment proceedings. Crisis and scandal are easy culprits, but their emergence does not preordain serious threats of impeachment. Presidents may be caught red-handed in acts of corruption or other misdeeds, yet this is no guarantee that legislatures will impeach presidents on these grounds. Indeed, Hochstetler and Edwards find that while presidents mired in a corruption scandal are more likely to face challenges to their presidencies, they are ultimately *less* likely to fall.⁵ The presence of scandal can provide cover for what might otherwise be a risky political strategy for legislatures—impeaching a president—but scandal alone does not compel legislatures to action.

Widespread social protest and public support for impeachment also likely increase the odds of impeachment. But as Llanos and Marsteintredet argue, even when protests emerge, they are often the final straw in a chain of events leading to impeachment, and they sometimes emerge *after* congressional investigations have begun.⁶ Moreover, protests can cut both ways, creating public demand for impeachment or providing an embattled president with a “popular shield” against legislative opponents.⁷ And though protests have sometimes brought down presidents (in Argentina, Ecuador, and Bolivia, for example), protesters lack institutional authority to remove presidents and thus count on legislatures or resignations to carry out their will. As with scandal, protest and public opinion might offer political cover for impeachment, but they do not compel it,

⁵ Kathryn Hochstetler and Margaret E. Edwards, “Failed Presidencies: Identifying and Explaining a South American Anomaly,” *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 1, no. 2 (2009): 31–57.

⁶ Mariana Llanos and Leiv Marsteintredet, “Conclusions: Presidential Breakdowns Revisited,” in *Presidential Breakdowns in Latin America: Causes and Outcomes of Executive Instability in Developing Democracies*, ed. Mariana Llanos and Leiv Marsteintredet (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 213–28.

⁷ Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, “A Two-Level Theory of Presidential Instability,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 56, no. 1 (2014): 34–54.

and friendly or collusive legislatures can protect even the most embattled presidents from removal.⁸

Finally, current literature places excessive weight on the partisan composition of the legislature. Explicitly or implicitly, scholars argue that legislatures inherently pose threats to presidents when their parties hold a minority of seats, depriving presidents of a “legislative shield.”⁹ But this view, that the partisan or ideological makeup preordains “the opposition” to challenge presidential authority, underappreciates the prevalence and the very function of coalitions, which are built precisely to bridge this institutional gap.¹⁰ Serious impeachment threats against minority presidents do not follow naturally or inevitably from scandal or protest; their emergence must also be accounted for. The focus on minority presidents who lack a partisan majority in the legislature overlooks the central role that a president’s governing coalition can play in disarming—or escalating—apparent threats of impeachment.

COALITIONAL POLITICS AND PRESIDENTIAL IMPEACHMENTS

We argue that whether, when, and why legislatures decide to remove presidents from office is driven by intra-coalitional political dynamics. In building this argument, we draw on scholarship that places the president’s governing coalition at the center of presidential systems.¹¹ Whereas earlier scholarship on democratic stability cast presidentialism in fatalistic light with regard to

⁸ Gretchen Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment*.

⁹ Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment*.

¹⁰ Sérgio Henrique Hudson de Abranches, “Presidencialismo de coalizão: o dilema institucional brasileiro,” *Dados* 31 (1988): 5–38; Gabriel L. Negretto, “Minority Presidents and Democratic Performance in Latin America,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 48, no. 3 (2006): 63–92; José Antonio Cheibub, *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹¹ Abranches, “Presidencialismo de coalizão”; Cheibub, *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy*; Chaisty, Cheeseman, and Power, *Coalitional Presidentialism*.

regime survival because of inter-branch conflict,¹² more recent scholarship has drawn attention towards the informal institutions of coalitional presidentialism,¹³ which enable minority presidents to compensate for their parties' minority status in the legislature by building and maintaining multiparty and ideologically heterogeneous coalitions. Such coalition-building has historically been the norm in Latin America, where proportional representation is associated with fragmented multiparty systems and typically prevent a president's party from capturing a legislative majority.¹⁴ To govern without partisan majorities in the legislature, presidents must assemble coalitions among actors whose cooperation is contingent across a range of factors.

Previous scholarship has largely cast executive-legislative political dynamics in dichotomous (friendly or antagonistic) terms based on the partisan composition of the legislature. We, however, see this relationship as a dynamic and contingent one that is not foreclosed by partisan or ideological misalignment and that is sensitive to broader political conditions. We emphasize that minority presidents rely on coalitions, even of strange bedfellows, to enact their agendas and remain in office. Coalition partners, in turn, agree to cooperate in exchange for their own benefits, often with little regard for party or ideology. Historically in Latin America, minority presidents have been more common than not,¹⁵ yet these presidents have managed to govern effectively by cooperating with members of the putative opposition.¹⁶

As Chaisty et al. argue, presidents possess powerful "toolkits" to build and sustain coalitions with contingent pacts that grant benefits to coalition partners—promises of political

¹² Juan J. Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism," *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 1 (1990): 51–69; Scott Mainwaring, "Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination," *Comparative Political Studies* 26, no. 2 (1993): 198–228.

¹³ Chaisty, Cheeseman, and Power, *Coalitional Presidentialism*.

¹⁴ Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (New York: Wiley, 1959); Mainwaring, "Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy."

¹⁵ Arturo Valenzuela, "Latin American Presidencies Interrupted," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 4 (2004): 5–19.

¹⁶ Cheibub, *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy*; Negretto, "Minority Presidents and Democratic Performance."

influence or future power, cabinet posts, pork, or control over the allocation of government contracts, etc.¹⁷ These “understandings” sustain the coalition by aligning the interests of the president and her coalition partners, who, by controlling the levers of impeachment, play the role of veto players exercising discretion over the president’s fate. Presidents are likely to survive impeachment threats so long as coalitions remain intact. When coalitions unravel, and particularly when the president’s interests are pit against those of her coalition partners, erstwhile allies are likely to resort to impeachment in acts of self-interest.

In this view, the factors previously identified as strong correlates of failed presidencies—malfeasance, political scandal, economic crisis, and mass protest—are not irrelevant, but are better understood as exogenous shocks that thrust impeachment onto the national political agenda and test the cohesion of the coalition. These certainly qualify as risk factors for any president, but they alone cannot account for divergent outcomes of presidential impeachment and failure once a credible impeachment threat has emerged, justified or not. As we will see, legislatures (and coalition partners) are equally capable of manufacturing justifications for impeachment¹⁸ as they are of shielding malfeasant presidents or removing presidents who lack public support.¹⁹

Of course, coalitions have not gone entirely overlooked in previous scholarship. Pérez-Liñán’s account, which emphasizes the importance of the legislative shield, also maintains that “the strategy adopted by the executive early in the term is critical to shaping the legislators’ response once an impeachment crisis explodes,”²⁰ and illustrates that presidents who build large and extensive coalitions and maintain close relationships with congress—those who effectively manage their coalitions—are less likely to be impeached. We do not take issue with these claims,

¹⁷ Chaisty, Cheeseman, and Power, *Coalitional Presidentialism*.

¹⁸ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge*.

¹⁹ Pérez-Liñán, “A Two-Level Theory.”

²⁰ Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment*, 147.

but we emphasize that intra-coalitional politics and the legislative-executive relationship are dynamic, not static, and subject to updating based on how broader political conditions shape the strategic incentives of coalition partners. Under conditions of crisis or scandal, or even in the absence of a crisis when a president fails to tend to the interests of coalition partners, presidents who initially established adequate or functional working relationships with congress and coalition partners can see these relationships unravel. Such unraveling may transform the legislative shield into a legislative sword.

Though we argue that coalitional politics has not received due attention in previous scholarship, several studies help motivate this argument. In his study of minority presidents and coalition formation, Negretto finds no evidence that minority *presidents* are more likely to fall, but rather that majority *governments* are more likely to survive;²¹ Llanos and Marsteintredet find a strong correlation between the resignation of cabinet ministers and the likelihood of presidential failure;²² and in their analysis of Ecuador's coalitional politics, Acosta and Polga-Hecimovich link presidential instability to the inclusion of "pivotal" legislators (politicians exercising discretion over impeachment) in governing coalitions.²³ These authors imply, but do not develop, the notion that coalitional cohesion is critical to presidential survival of impeachment threats. We develop a more complete causal account and show that impeachments are not readily explained by conventional factors alone. Instead, we provide evidence that evasion of impeachment depends on the internal cohesion of multiparty coalitions formed around minority presidents—coalitions that are contingent on short-term, tactical considerations of partisan, factional, and personal advantage,

²¹ Negretto, "Minority Presidents and Democratic Performance."

²² Llanos and Marsteintredet, "Conclusions."

²³ Andrés Mejía Acosta and John Polga-Hecimovich, "Coalition Erosion and Presidential Instability in Ecuador," *Latin American Politics and Society* 53, no. 2 (2011): 87–111.

especially in contexts where governing coalitions bring together parties with strikingly divergent ideological profiles and programmatic objectives.

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY AND CASE SELECTION

We evaluate these propositions by applying process-tracing to six “diverse cases” of attempted impeachment in four countries, leveraging variation on independent and dependent variables to make inferences on causal processes.²⁴ We gain leverage on the dependent variable by comparing embattled presidents that faced legislative threats to their presidencies, but not all of whom ultimately fell. Process-tracing methods are most appropriate given our hypothesis that intra-coalitional political dynamics reflect the short-term tactical considerations of political actors, which are not mechanically determined by parties’ structural or institutional locations in a competitive democratic arena. In-depth qualitative comparative analysis thus allows us to uncover more precisely the causal processes leading to impeachment, and to adjudicate between background and proximate causes.²⁵ We rely on high-quality sources of domestic journalism, and in the Paraguayan case we supplement these sources with original, elite interviews.

The sequencing of our process-tracing analyses followed Beach and Pedersen’s iterative approach.²⁶ We first engaged in “outcome-explaining” analysis of two cases of presidential impeachment (Lugo and Rousseff), drawing on existing literature to explain the processes leading to impeachment. Finding these explanations unsatisfactory, we employed “theory-building” process-tracing in the second iteration, distilling from these cases the critical and proximate causes.

²⁴ Jason Seawright and John Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options,” *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008): 294–308.

²⁵ David Collier, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright, “Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology,” in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, ed. Henry E. Brady and David Collier (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 161–99.

²⁶ Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019).

Having arrived at a satisfactory revision of existing explanations, we then expanded our analysis to deviant, “theory-testing” cases (Temer and Kuczynski) to evaluate whether the mechanisms operated as hypothesized in “negative” cases.

	(Paraguay) Lugo	(Brazil) Rousseff	(Brazil) Temer	(Peru) Kuczynski
Crisis or scandal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public support for impeachment	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mobilization demanding impeachment	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political ideology of president	Center-left	Center-left	Center-right	Center-right
Minority president	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Majority coalition	No	Yes	Yes	No
Ideological alignment with coalition	No	No	Yes	Yes*
Coalition remained cohesive	No	No	Yes, Yes	Yes, No
President ousted	Yes	Yes	No, No	No, Yes

Table 1 Outcomes and Explanatory Factors *Kuczynski lacked a formal governing coalition, but he was ideologically aligned with the conservative majority in the legislature.

Table 1 displays the selected cases, values of the dependent variable, and explanatory factors. Our analysis focuses on four Latin American presidents who faced credible threats of impeachment between 2012 and 2018: the presidencies of Fernando Lugo in Paraguay, both Dilma Rousseff and Michel Temer in Brazil, and Pedro Kuczynski in Peru. The limited regional and temporal scope of these cases minimizes the risk that such factors might confound inferences and allows us to focus on theoretically relevant variation. Of these presidents, three ultimately fell, though in the cases of Temer and Kuczynski both presidents faced two separate impeachment attempts, providing additional variation within presidencies to leverage.

In selecting cases, we restricted our analysis to those that met two scope conditions: first, minority presidents; and second, the presence of crisis or scandal that, as we theorize, operates as

an exogenous shock, raising the specter of impeachment as a credible threat.²⁷ All presidents but Lugo faced significant public support for and mobilization demanding impeachment, yet the absence of these factors in Paraguay clearly demonstrates that they are not necessary conditions for impeachment. These cases also offer variation on variables central to alternative hypotheses, such as the president's political ideology and ideological alignment with coalition partners. Finally, these cases provide leverage on our independent variable of interest, coalitional cohesion. The analyses below pay close attention to the cases of Lugo and Rousseff, which are similar across many factors and combine heterogeneous multiparty coalitions with coalitional disintegration. The cases of Temer and Kuczynski are then presented to further test our hypothesis, leverage the ideological and partisan alignments, and evaluate alternative explanations.

ANALYSIS

The Rise and Fall of Fernando Lugo

In 2008, the presidential victory of Fernando Lugo, a leftist former bishop of the Catholic Church, took most observers by surprise, given the historical underdevelopment of leftist parties and movements in Paraguay, as well as the longstanding dominance of two conservative parties with roots in the nineteenth-century oligarchic order.²⁸ A proponent of peasant movements, liberation theology, and participatory democracy, Lugo presented a significant challenge to Paraguay's conservative political establishment, and it was evident from the start that political instability would plague Lugo's administration. Indeed, just three days after taking office Lugo faced his first impeachment threat, and talk of removing him from office became standard fare in

²⁷ James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004): 653–69.

²⁸ Kenneth M. Roberts, *Changing Course in Latin America: Party Systems in the Neoliberal Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

the discourse of congress, the media, and among the economic elite. Nevertheless, Lugo governed for nearly four years without serious impeachment threats—until July 2012, when lightning-quick proceedings removed Lugo from power in under twenty-four hours.²⁹

The broad coalition that elected Lugo to the presidency was built to challenge the long-dominant Colorado Party, a nineteenth-century party that had governed the country continuously—under both democratic and authoritarian regimes—since a short-lived civil war in 1948. The Colorados' conservative rivals were known as the Liberals (or the Authentic Radical Liberal Party, PLRA), a party also dating back to the nineteenth century. Though the Liberals ruled for a prolonged period in the early twentieth century and built a loyal following as rivals to the Colorados, they had been out of power since 1940. And though the Colorados' electoral dominance began to erode following redemocratization in 1989, opposition forces remained fragmented and Colorado decline did not empower the PLRA.

A political crisis created opportunity in 2006, however, when Colorado president Nestor Duarte sought to amend the constitution to allow his reelection, prompting opposition forces to coalesce and a broad movement to emerge in protest. In this context, Lugo emerged as an independent political leader. With a background in the church, Lugo was seen as above party politics, allowing him to appeal to a diverse coalition of partisans and independents,³⁰ which generated momentum for a presidential bid. But though his campaign generated enthusiasm, Lugo's broad coalition lacked the nationwide political organization needed to defeat the dominant Colorados, much less govern the country.

²⁹ Pérez-Liñán, "A Two-Level Theory"; Leiv Marsteintredet, Mariana Llanos, and Detlef Nolte, "Paraguay and the Politics of Impeachment," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 4 (2013): 110–23.

³⁰ Andrew Nickson, "The General Election in Paraguay, April 2008," *Electoral Studies* 28, no. 1 (2009): 145–49.

To address this organizational deficit, Lugo formed an alliance with the PLRA, which supported Lugo's candidacy and gained a spot on his ticket with a vice-presidential nominee. According to Lugo, this alliance was forged "for practical reasons," because "we did not have electoral experience, and the Colorado Party is an election-winning machine...and the PLRA is the only party that had national reach."³¹ Lugo's PLRA running-mate, Federico Franco, echoed this view: "We couldn't get there with a PLRA candidate...in the same way that Lugo couldn't get there without the PLRA's support. He needed the muscle, the strength of the PLRA's structure...with people knowledgeable of the electoral process."³²

Thus Lugo entered the 2008 electoral campaign leading a multiparty, politically heterogeneous coalition. Lugo ran on the ticket of the Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC), an electoral front that included the PLRA and several small leftist and center-left parties, as well as civic alliances formed by labor and peasant unions. Adding to this heterogeneity, the PLRA itself was far from a disciplined or unitary organization. The party had three primary internal factions, led by vice-president Franco and senators Efraín Alegre and Blas Llano. The broad-based coalition offered Lugo a mandate for various economic and political reforms, including agrarian reform, expanded social citizenship rights, and measures to combat corruption, among others.³³

In 2008, Lugo's APC won the presidency with 41 percent of the vote. This electoral victory awarded the APC sizable seat shares in both houses of congress, though in both cases PLRA politicians held the overwhelming share of those seats. Although the coalition did not have enough seats to pass legislation on its own, it had enough strength to form a "legislative shield" against impeachments—so long as the APC acted in concert.³⁴

³¹ Fernando Lugo, interview by Jose T. Sanchez Gomez, (July 1, 2014).

³² Federico Franco, interview by Jose T. Sanchez Gomez, (June 23, 2014).

³³ Richard Gott, "All Change in Paraguay: The Promise of Fernando Lugo," *Global Dialogue* 10 (2008): 48–58.

³⁴ Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment*.

Control over the executive branch became an enormous point of tension, however, as the different parties—and factions within the PLRA—demanded their own quota of power. To stabilize his coalition, Lugo resorted to one of the most common strategies available in the “presidential toolkit”: the distribution of cabinet positions to allied partners.³⁵ Yet the allocation of cabinet positions itself created unrest within the coalition: PLRA politicians felt they were not adequately rewarded, considering the party’s contribution to Lugo’s electoral success, and they wanted greater influence over appointments.³⁶ Leftist coalition allies were also unsatisfied. Some leftist leaders felt Lugo failed to capitalize on the unprecedented victory of a leftist president by not appointing cabinet officials favoring more radical institutional and structural transformations.

Lugo struggled to appease these politically and ideologically fractious blocs within his governing coalition. At the same time, the government expanded social policies (a cash transfer program, free medical care, and increased spending on social programs) that buttressed Lugo’s own popularity, doing little to ease tensions. These policies created unease among conservative elites inside and outside the coalition, who feared leftist influence in the administration, and likened Lugo’s government to the radical “Bolivarian” left in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador.

Not surprisingly, then, the combination of conservative opposition and intra-coalitional dissent meant that political opponents (including some PLRA members) routinely raised the possibility of impeachment. Indeed, three days after he took office, the senate’s legal advisor suggested Lugo undergo trial for the way he appointed ministers elected as legislators. No party took the accusations seriously, but it was a harbinger of things to come. Six months later, in March 2009, a cable from the US Embassy reported rumors that political leaders from the Colorado and UNACE parties were “working together to assume power via (mostly) legal means should

³⁵ Chaisty, Cheeseman, and Power, *Coalitional Presidentialism*.

³⁶ Blas Llano, interview by Jose T. Sanchez Gomez, (July 2014).

President Lugo stumble in coming months. Their goal: capitalize on any of Lugo's missteps to break the political deadlock in Congress, impeach Lugo and assure their own political supremacy."³⁷ In May 2009, another cable reported that some politicians believed the PLRA vice-president was part of a plot to overthrow Lugo.³⁸ In February 2010, tensions around impeachment gained international attention when, during a meeting at the American embassy, vice-president Franco and other politicians were alleged to have discussed the possibility of impeachment with U.S. military officials.³⁹ Politicians also continued offering justifications for Lugo's impeachment to the public, including that he was a threat to the "democratic system"⁴⁰ and for his pursuit of a "leftist totalitarian project."⁴¹ This discourse was even encouraged by mainstream media outlets, including the highly influential *ABC Color*. But although some charges were formally presented and advanced partially through congress,⁴² none garnered significant support before 2012.

In 2012, however, a series of factors coalesced to finally erode Lugo's multiparty coalition, leading to his removal from office. First, Lugo had gradually been distancing himself from key bases of support, especially within the PLRA. Lugo's relationship with his vice-president began to erode almost immediately following his election as he excluded Franco from the process of selecting cabinet ministers.⁴³ This left Franco feeling snubbed, and it violated the tacit

³⁷ "Paraguayan Pals Plot Parliamentary Putsch," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Paraguay Asunción, March 28, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09ASUNCION189_a.html.

³⁸ "Circling Sharks in Landlocked Paraguay," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Paraguay Asunción, May 6, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09ASUNCION293_a.html.

³⁹ "Grosera carta de ministro a embajadora de EE.UU.," *ABC Color*, March 5, 2010, <http://www.abc.com.py/edicion-imprensa/politica/grosera-carta-de-ministro-a-embajadora-de-eeuu-75238.html>.

⁴⁰ "Antes de seis meses, hay que sacar a Lugo, advierte Jaeggli," *ABC Color*, November 13, 2009, <http://www.abc.com.py/edicion-imprensa/politica/antes-de-seis-meses-hay-que-sacar-a-lugo-advierte-jaeggli-40543.html>.

⁴¹ "Calé trata de cobardes a los liberales que no quieren hacer juicio político," *ABC Color*, August 31, 2009, <http://www.abc.com.py/edicion-imprensa/politica/cale-trata-de-cobardes-a-los-liberales-que-no-quieren-hacer-juicio-politico-16425.html>.

⁴² Katia Gorostiaga, "Del acuerdo inicial a la ambigüedad: incidencia de las estrategias presidenciales en las destituciones anticipadas" (Master's Thesis, FLACSO Mexico, 2016).

⁴³ Franco, interview.

understanding that the PLRA would have influence proportional to its size in Lugo's coalition. The second break came in 2011 as Lugo's allies proposed constitutional amendments to allow him to run for a second term. Lugo's Minister of Public Infrastructure, Efraín Alegre (PLRA), publicly declared his opposition to such constitutional reforms and shortly thereafter was removed from his cabinet post.⁴⁴ Matters only worsened as Lugo increased the presence of Colorado leaders in his government, further straining the relationship with the PLRA.⁴⁵

Third, significant peasant mobilizations and land conflicts began to emerge in rural areas, adding to political tensions between the government and conservative elites. Although Lugo's administration had not implemented any agrarian reform and was unsuccessful in recovering public lands that had been unduly allocated to powerful oligarchs under previous administrations, the conservative opposition accused Lugo of encouraging class struggle and violent land takeovers. Major land occupations by peasant organizations in 2011 posed a serious threat to powerful landowners, and while the government successfully prevented armed confrontation, landowners and their political allies nonetheless blamed the government for encouraging conflict and violence.⁴⁶ Fear of Lugo's leftist leanings was transparent among conservatives both inside and outside the coalition, exacerbating ideological conflict.

As the 2013 election approached, tensions culminated around the selection of a successor to Lugo, who was prevented by law from serving a second term. Lugo's unwillingness to explicitly back a PLRA candidate angered those in the party who felt the PLRA should lead the ticket as a form of political reciprocity. As Franco reports, "we believed [Lugo] would produce rotation, that

⁴⁴ Efraín Alegre, interview by Jose T. Sanchez Gomez, (July 3, 2014).

⁴⁵ Gorostiaga, "Del acuerdo inicial."

⁴⁶ Juan Gayoso, "Cartes alerta sobre olor a sangre en Ñacunday," *Ultima Hora*, March 10, 2012, <https://www.ultimahora.com/cartes-alerta-olor-sangre-nacunday-n510042.html>; Antonella Brignardello, "Advierten sobre posible violencia en el campo," *ABC Color*, January 25, 2012, <http://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/advierten-sobre-posible-violencia-en-el-campo-359138.html>.

he would govern the country trying to correct its course, and then would enable the possibility for someone from the PLRA to continue this process in the next period.”⁴⁷ Instead, Lugo had begun to associate himself with a progressive, independent journalist widely viewed as his preferred candidate for the 2013 presidential election, confirming his disregard for the PLRA in the eyes of many.

Matters came to a head in June 2012 when the on-going land conflicts left 11 peasants and six police officers dead in a rural province. While the causes of this massacre remain unclear, what is certain is that “the days following were a mess,” according to Lugo’s former advisor, Gustavo Codas, “because sectors of the left wanted to protest a government they saw repressing peasants, and elites wanted to overthrow Lugo because they saw a government supporting peasant rebellions.”⁴⁸ This outbreak of violence thus inflamed the coalition’s internal conflicts, especially after Lugo responded by appointing Candia Amarilla of the Colorado Party as the new Minister of Internal Affairs, placing him in charge of the agency which oversees the National Police. Amarilla was known for his adoption of repressive measures against peasant movements during an earlier stint as attorney general under the Colorado Party, and his inclusion in the administration angered both the left and right factions of Lugo’s coalition. Moreover, Lugo made little effort to coordinate a response to the crisis with the PLRA, pushing aside the limited support base that remained in the party.

Lugo’s former Minister and Chief of Cabinet, Miguel López-Perito, confirms that the final straw for Lugo’s coalition was appointing Candia Amarilla to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Had Lugo named a Liberal instead, López-Perito reports, the PLRA might not have joined the

⁴⁷ Franco, interview.

⁴⁸ Gustavo Codas, interview by Jose T. Sanchez Gomez, (July 15, 2017).

opposition and supported Lugo's impeachment.⁴⁹ Three days after the massacre, "Llano and the heads of the Liberal Party in Congress called upon representatives from the left and ministers close to Lugo to take a decisive approach toward the PLRA and the removal of Candia Amarilla," recalls former Senator Alberto Grillón.⁵⁰ Lugo, however, ignored their demands, sealing his own fate. With Amarilla remaining in his post, the final important faction of the PLRA abandoned Lugo's administration.

Though Lugo faced no mass protests, continued enjoying broad public support during the crisis,⁵¹ and presided over a stable economy, this sequence of events ultimately broke his "legislative" and "popular" shields and left him vulnerable to impeachment.⁵² On June 21, one week after the massacre, impeachment charges were brought for "improper performance of duties," passing the lower house by a vote of 76-1, with three abstentions. The following day, the upper house also voted overwhelmingly in favor of impeachment, clearly demonstrating Lugo's weakness in congress once the "legislative shield" of the PLRA was removed. Though Lugo stated that he would accept the outcome of the vote to "avoid bloodshed,"⁵³ he simultaneously insisted that the process amounted to a parliamentary coup that violated his right to prepare a proper defense and seek due process.

Vice-President Franco, who took office with support from all PLRA factions, defended Lugo's ouster in a televised interview in Spain the following year, saying "impeachment, which is the same as the vote of no-confidence you have here in Spain, is the most constitutional thing there

⁴⁹ Miguel López-Perito, interview by Jose T. Sanchez Gomez, (July 15, 2017).

⁵⁰ Alberto Grillón, interview by Jose T. Sanchez Gomez, (July 16, 2017).

⁵¹ "Lugo mantiene mejor imagen que Federico Franco, según encuesta," *Ultima Hora*, July 16, 2012, <https://www.ultimahora.com/lugo-mantiene-mejor-imagen-que-federico-franco-segun-encuesta-n545509.html>.

⁵² Pérez-Liñán, "A Two-Level Theory."

⁵³ Fernando Lugo, "Entrevista con Fernando Lugo: 'Empezamos la resistencia pacífica,'" interview by Martín Granovsky, *Cuba Sí*, June 25, 2012, <http://cubasi.cu/cubasi-noticias-cuba-mundo-ultima-hora/item/7893-entrevista-con-fernando-lugo-%E2%80%9CEmpezamos-la-resistencia-pacifica%E2%80%9D>.

is.”⁵⁴ Such a rationalization clearly frames the impeachment process as a political act rather than a duty-bound, legal response to presidential wrongdoing or an exercise of horizontal accountability. Ultimately, Lugo’s ability to survive impeachment threats hinged on his ability to appease disparate factions of his own coalition and comply with the tacit agreements on which the coalition was built. Once this compliance was called into question, congressional allies broke with Lugo and joined his opponents in rapid impeachment proceedings under the cover of political scandal. The impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil followed much of the same political logic, even though it took longer to unfold.

The Demise of Dilma Rousseff

In Brazil’s 2014 election, 28 parties won seats in the lower and 18 in the upper house of congress. Even under normal circumstances such fragmentation only deepens the challenges of maintaining a ruling coalition, let alone with the addition of aggressive investigations into political corruption. Such was the case in Brazil after revelations of a massive bribery scheme implicating all major political parties threatened the futures of key coalition partners, undermined the tacit understandings that sustained the president’s coalition, and raised the risk of impeachment.

Key members of Workers’ Party (PT) President Dilma Rousseff’s second-term coalition belonged to the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), a center-right party which became deeply implicated in the corruption scandal. Rousseff inherited many of her party alliances from her predecessor, Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva, who brokered the inclusion of Michel Temer (PMDB), then-leader of the lower chamber, on Rousseff’s ticket as the vice-presidential

⁵⁴ “Entrevista al presidente de Paraguay, Federico Franco, en Los Desayunos,” *Los Desayunos* (RTVE, April 2, 2013), <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/los-desayunos-de-tve/entrevista-presidente-paraguay-federico-franco-desayunos/1742866/>.

candidate.⁵⁵ Initially this paid off politically: the PMDB and PT held the most seats in congress, and PMDB politicians were elected to leadership positions in the legislature for much of Rousseff's tenure. Renan Calheiros (PMDB) was first elected leader of the senate in 2013 and remained until the end of 2016. Likewise, Eduardo Cunha (PMDB) was elected leader of the chamber of deputies in 2015 and remained until mid-2016, when Rousseff was ousted. Thus Rousseff, herself a leader of the center-left PT, relied on the center-right PMDB to govern.

Although this coalition with conservative parties was initially a functional one that lasted through Rousseff's reelection in 2014, the relationship soured with revelations of a massive bribery scheme that implicated and threatened an impressive proportion of the political class. The scheme centered around the state-controlled energy company, Petrobras, and consisted of executives who colluded to create a cartel of engineering firms that competed for government contracts, from which they would extract bribes and divert funds. Investigations were first revealed when federal authorities arrested a former Petrobras executive and his partner-in-crime in March 2014, well before Rousseff's reelection in October 2014.

Over the course of 2014 it became clear that what initially appeared to be the isolated improprieties of select individuals was instead a massive scheme in which firms, Petrobras executives, politicians, and party officials all participated for personal and partisan gain. Once found guilty and imprisoned, informants began offering testimony in exchange for plea deals.⁵⁶ Authorities conservatively estimated that upwards of BR\$42 billion were lost to this scheme,

⁵⁵ Jeferson Ribeiro, "PT e PMDB fecham acordo para candidatura de Dilma em 2010," *Globo*, October 20, 2009, <http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Politica/0,,MUL1348659-5601,00-pt+e+pmdb+fecham+acordo+para+candidatura+de+dilma+em.html>.

⁵⁶ Camila Bomfim and Mariana Oliveira, "Ministério Público e doleiro Youssef assinam acordo de delação premiada," *Globo*, September 24, 2014, <http://g1.globo.com/politica/operacao-lava-jato/noticia/2014/09/ministerio-publico-e-doleiro-youssef-assinam-acordo-de-delacao-premiada.html>.

though this was not clear at the time of the 2014 presidential election.⁵⁷ Informants alleged that funds were used in Rousseff's 2010 campaign,⁵⁸ but the electoral court initially approved her campaign's finances following the 2014 election, seeming to subdue these accusations.⁵⁹

Yet Brazil's three main political parties, the PT, PMDB, and PSDB (Brazilian Social Democratic Party), continued to face allegations from informants, who claimed kickbacks were hidden in foreign accounts, laundered, and funneled into party coffers. In February 2015, a former Petrobras executive testified that the PT benefitted handsomely from this scheme, triggering a major backlash against the government in public opinion.⁶⁰ Indeed, polls conducted shortly before and after this news broke showed that the percentage of those negatively assessing Rousseff's government increased from 44 to 62 percent.⁶¹ Anti-PT sentiment quickly translated into mass protests: in March 2015, an estimated 2.5 million Brazilians took to the streets in over 200 cities calling for Rousseff's impeachment.⁶² The political crisis deepened in August when the electoral court reopened its auditing of the PT's 2014 campaign finances, suggesting there was evidence to the swirl of allegations.⁶³

⁵⁷ Bibiana Dionísio, "PF estima que prejuízo da Petrobras com corrupção pode ser de R\$42 bi," *Globo*, November 12, 2015, <http://g1.globo.com/pr/parana/noticia/2015/11/pf-estima-que-prejuizo-da-petrobras-com-corrupcao-pode-ser-de-r-42-bi.html>.

⁵⁸ Rodrigo Rangel, "Campanha de Dilma em 2010 pediu dinheiro ao esquema do 'petrolão,'" *Veja*, September 27, 2014, <http://veja.abril.com.br/politica/campanha-de-dilma-em-2010-pediu-dinheiro-ao-esquema-do-petrolao/>.

⁵⁹ "TSE aprova com ressalvas contas de Dilma e de Comitê Financeiro para presidente da República," *Tribunal Superior Eleitoral*, December 11, 2014, <http://www.tse.jus.br/imprensa/noticias-tse/2014/Dezembro/tse-aprova-com-ressalvas-contas-de-dilma-e-de-comite-financeiro-para-presidente-da-republica>.

⁶⁰ Fabio Serapião and Wanderley Preite Sobrinho, "PT recebeu até 200 milhões de dólares em propina, estima delator," *CartaCapital*, February 5, 2015, <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/delator-da-lava-jato-estima-que-pt-recebeu-200-milhoes-de-reais-8483.html>.

⁶¹ "Avaliação da presidente Dilma Rousseff" (São Paulo: Datafolha, November 27, 2015), http://media.folha.uol.com.br/datafolha/2015/11/30/avaliacao_dilma.pdf.

⁶² "Mapa das manifestações pelo Brasil," *Globo*, accessed May 26, 2017, <http://especiais.g1.globo.com/politica/mapa-manifestacoes-no-brasil/todos/>.

⁶³ Mariana Oliveira, "Ministro do TSE pede investigação das contas de campanha de Dilma," *Globo*, August 21, 2015, <http://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2015/08/ministro-do-tse-pede-pf-e-pgr-para-analisar-contas-de-dilma.html>.

Although the PT was not alone in the accusations of corruption, they were among the worst damaged. The PT had controlled the presidency since 2003, and Petrobras production had expanded considerably under Lula following the discovery of new oil resources. Rousseff had herself been a Petrobras executive before Lula handpicked her as his successor. PT incumbency, therefore, made it easy for conservative media outlets to portray the party as the focal point of a burgeoning corruption scandal. The political impact of the scandal was only heightened by the fact that the PT had long claimed the mantle of a party with integrity; it positioned itself as an alternative to the corrupt and elite political establishment, and it claimed to represent a new, non-clientelistic way of “doing politics” that was accountable to an organized civil society.

Nevertheless, as anti-PT sentiments crystallized in public opinion, calls for impeachment remained by and large the rallying cry of protesters in the streets. Few prominent politicians echoed these calls initially, despite some politicians’ submitting impeachment petitions. Indeed, before eventually accepting one such petition, lower house leader Cunha rejected more than ten separate requests for Rousseff’s impeachment after her 2014 reelection. In retrospect, many politicians, aware of their own ties to the bribery scheme and unsure of how far investigations might go, were likely opting for prudence by not vocally supporting impeachment. With time, however, it became increasingly clear that the judiciary, empowered by public opinion, was determined to investigate and prosecute as many officeholders as possible, heightening uncertainty and risk for politicians.

As investigations proceeded and prosecutors took aim at Cunha himself, Rousseff’s coalition began to unravel. In July 2015, news broke of testimony accusing Cunha of receiving a US\$5 million bribe in the Petrobras scheme.⁶⁴ That same day, Cunha publicly accused Rousseff

⁶⁴ Graciliano Rocha and Bela Megale, “Delator na Lava Jato diz que pagou propina de US\$5 mi a Eduardo Cunha,” *Folha de S.Paulo*, July 16, 2015, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2015/07/1656614-delator-diz-que-cunha-pediu-propina-em-contrato-da-petrobras.shtml>.

of coordinating with prosecutors to coax an allegation from informants. The following day, Cunha publicly broke with Rousseff, openly declaring himself in opposition to the government. Denying that this defection was motivated by personal grievances, Cunha cryptically claimed that his decision would not affect the “institutional relationship” with Rousseff.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, a pattern was established whereby Cunha would retaliate against Rousseff as investigations into his activities crept closer.

In August, prosecutors moved to indict Cunha for participation in a scheme that diverted US\$40 million of public funds.⁶⁶ At this point, though his future was growing increasingly insecure, Cunha had still not come out publicly in favor of impeachment. No sitting politician had yet been arrested due to the scandal, and Cunha likely believed he could survive by relying on the judicial privileges of his office or powerful allies to subvert investigations. Similarly, senate leader Renan Calheiros—who would not be indicted for corruption until late 2016—publicly stated his *opposition* to impeachment, saying that impeaching Rousseff would “set fire to Brazil.”⁶⁷ The situation grew more tense, however, when the lower house’s ethics commission began considering a request to investigate Cunha for failing to disclose Swiss bank accounts allegedly used to accept bribes—a charge that could remove Cunha from congress and deprive him of the judicial privileges

⁶⁵ Fernando Calgaro, Nathalia Passarinho, and Lucas Salomão, “Eduardo Cunha anuncia rompimento com o governo e diz que é ‘oposição,’” *Globo*, July 17, 2015, <http://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2015/07/eduardo-cunha-anuncia-rompimento-politico-com-o-governo-dilma.html>.

⁶⁶ Vladimir Netto and Mariana Oliveira, “Janot apresenta ao STF denúncia por corrupção contra Cunha e Collor,” *Globo*, August 20, 2015, <http://g1.globo.com/politica/operacao-lava-jato/noticia/2015/08/janot-apresenta-ao-stf-denuncia-por-corrupcao-contra-cunha-e-collor.html>.

⁶⁷ Agência Brasil, “Impeachment de Dilma seria ‘botar fogo no Brasil’, diz Renan,” *CartaCapital*, August 11, 2015, <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/blogs/parlatorio/impeachment-de-dilma-seria-botar-fogo-no-brasil-diz-renan-2523.html>.

of his office, slowing the speed of his trial considerably.⁶⁸ Adding to the political intrigue, the ethics commission's decision would hinge on the votes of three PT deputies.

With Cunha's situation growing desperate, threatening Rousseff with impeachment behind closed doors offered him much-needed political leverage, despite the absence of evidence to implicate Rousseff personally in the scandal. Mindful of the damage that Cunha's retaliation could inflict on Rousseff and the PT, ex-president Lula met with PT deputies to try to organize a "truce" between the party and Cunha, and publicly stated that "no one wins" with the ethics investigation into Cunha.⁶⁹ To no avail, on December 2 the ethics committee voted to investigate Cunha's alleged improprieties.⁷⁰ Hours later, Cunha announced he would accept a petition for Rousseff's impeachment.⁷¹ Notably, Rousseff's alleged offense in this petition was not corruption—the basis for protesters' calls for impeachment and Cunha's public rationale—but rather a contorted charge of violating federal budget laws by temporarily transferring funds from state banks to government social programs, an accounting practice also employed by each of Rousseff's democratic predecessors.

Though Cunha's role was critical in initiating impeachment proceedings, the other key coalition members, Calheiros and Temer, similarly advanced the impeachment process, albeit in less conspicuous ways. Less than one week after Cunha agreed to a vote on impeachment, Temer sent an open letter to Rousseff in which he claimed she had no confidence in him or his party and

⁶⁸ Ranier Bragon, "Com apoio de metade do PT, PSOL e Rede pedem cassação de Cunha," *Folha de S.Paulo*, October 13, 2015, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2015/10/1693434-com-apoio-de-metade-do-pt-psol-e-rede-pedem-cassacao-de-cunha.shtml>.

⁶⁹ Vera Rosa and Adriano Ceolin, "Lula pede a deputados do PT que deem 'trégua' para Eduardo Cunha," *Estadão*, October 16, 2015, <http://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,lula-pede-ao-pt-tregua-para-cunha--imp-,1780636>.

⁷⁰ "Bancada do PT decide votar contra Cunha no Conselho de Ética," *UOL*, December 2, 2015, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2015/12/02/bancada-do-pt-decide-votar-contra-cunha-no-conselho-de-etica.htm>.

⁷¹ Felipe Amorim and Marina Motomura, "Eduardo Cunha aceita pedido de impeachment da oposição contra Dilma," *UOL*, December 2, 2015, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2015/12/02/eduardo-cunha-impeachment.htm>.

that he felt like a “decorative” vice-president – a strong signal that his loyalty to Rousseff was fading.⁷² Meanwhile, Calheiros never publicly stated his position on impeachment—even as he became the target of a growing number of corruption investigations—but his coordination with Temer and Cunha in advance of impeachment votes suggests a concerted effort to remove Rousseff. In March 2016, Calheiros and Temer began meeting privately with each other and other PMDB politicians. In late March, the PMDB national director announced the party’s formal withdrawal from Rousseff’s government, saying no politician could hold office in the federal government in the name of the party.⁷³ In April, under the looming threat of being suspended from office by the Supreme Court, Cunha scheduled an impeachment vote in the lower house.⁷⁴ The following day, anticipating the passage of the lower house vote, Calheiros scheduled a vote in the senate.⁷⁵

Rousseff’s impeachment seemed eminently likely, but it remained unclear if the lower house could reach the two-thirds majority needed. On April 16th, Rousseff made a last-ditch effort to persuade legislators to vote against impeachment. In a column in the widely-read *Folha de S.Paulo* newspaper, Rousseff accused her coalition partners outright of using impeachment to thwart corruption investigations.⁷⁶ However, with a significant portion of congress implicated (or soon to be) in the scandal, Rousseff’s appeal likely only reminded politicians that it would be less

⁷² Valdo Cruz, Daniela Lima, and Marina Dias, “Em carta-desabafo a Dilma, Temer diz que foi desprezado,” *Folha de S.Paulo*, December 8, 2015, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2015/12/1716259-em-carta-desabafo-a-dilma-temer-diz-que-foi-desprezado.shtml>.

⁷³ Nathalia Passarinho and Fernando Calgaro, “Por aclamação, PMDB oficializa rompimento com governo Dilma,” *Globo*, March 29, 2016, <http://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2016/03/por-aclamacao-pmdb-oficializa-rompimento-com-governo-dilma.html>.

⁷⁴ Ranier Bragon and Debora Alvares, “Cunha decide começar votação do impeachment por deputados do Sul,” *Folha de S.Paulo*, April 12, 2016, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2016/04/1760156-cunha-marca-votacao-do-impeachment-para-as-14h-deste-domingo.shtml>.

⁷⁵ Ricardo Brito, Isabela Bonfim, and Julia Lindner, “Renan articula votar afastamento de Dilma pelo Senado no dia 11 de maio,” *Estadão*, April 13, 2016, <http://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,renan-articula-votar-afastamento-de-dilma-pelo-senado-no-dia-11-de-maio,1855750>.

⁷⁶ Dilma Rousseff, “Democracia: o lado certo da história,” *Folha de S.Paulo*, April 16, 2016, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2016/04/1761562-democracia-o-lado-certo-da-historia.shtml>.

risky to install Temer as president—given his own implication in corruption allegations—than to leave Rousseff in power. The following day, the lower house voted in favor of impeachment, surpassing the two-thirds threshold needed.⁷⁷ Within a month, the senate also voted in favor, officially suspending Rousseff from office and installing Temer as interim president while the senate investigated the charges against her.⁷⁸ The senate did not convict Rousseff until late August, but after her suspension, conviction was a foregone conclusion.

Developments following Rousseff's impeachment support the cover-up narrative. As president, Temer immediately stirred controversy by implementing austerity measures contrary to the platform on which Rousseff was elected, and by replacing Rousseff's race and gender-diverse cabinet with white men, nearly one-third of whom were under active investigation for corruption.⁷⁹ Secret recordings of Temer and allies discussing impeachment as a cover-up effort quickly emerged, unmasking any pretext for Rousseff's removal. Within weeks, corrupt cabinet ministers caught red-handed resigned from their posts, including the anti-corruption minister.⁸⁰ In the months following Rousseff's suspension, Cunha was removed from office by the Supreme Court on charges of obstruction of justice,⁸¹ was officially expelled from the legislature,⁸² faced another

⁷⁷ Carol Siqueira, "Câmara autoriza instauração de processo de impeachment de Dilma com 367 votos a favor e 137 contra," *Agência Câmara Notícias*, April 17, 2016, <http://www2.camara.leg.br/camaranoticias/noticias/politica/507325-camara-autoriza-instauracao-de-processo-de-impeachment-de-dilma-com-367-votos-a-favor-e-137-contra.html>.

⁷⁸ Teresa Cardoso, "Senado abre processo de impeachment contra Dilma Rousseff," *Agência Senado*, May 12, 2016, <http://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2016/05/12/senado-abre-processo-de-impeachment-contra-dilma-rousseff>.

⁷⁹ Leandro Prazeres, "Quase 1/3 de ministros de Temer são alvo de inquéritos no STF," *UOL*, April 11, 2017, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2017/04/11/mais-de-13-de-ministros-de-temer-sao-alvo-de-inqueritos-no-stf-segundo-jornal.htm>.

⁸⁰ Simon Romero, "Recording Spurs Anticorruption Minister to Resign in Brazil," *The New York Times*, May 20, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/31/world/americas/brazil-fabiano-silveira-resign.html>.

⁸¹ Leandro Prazeres, "Por unanimidade, STF afasta Eduardo Cunha da Câmara," *UOL*, May 5, 2016, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2016/05/05/stf-afastamento-eduardo-cunha.htm>.

⁸² Eduardo Piovesan, "Câmara cassa mandato de Eduardo Cunha," *Agência Câmara Notícias*, September 13, 2016, <http://www2.camara.leg.br/camaranoticias/noticias/politica/516150-plenario-da-camara-aprova-cassacao-do-mandato-de-eduardo-cunha.html>.

indictment for corruption,⁸³ and received one prison sentence of fifteen years.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, Calheiros faced charges of obstruction of justice and multiple corruption charges, and the Supreme Court removed him from his position as leader of the Senate. By mid-2017, Calheiros was cited in twelve investigations into the bribery scheme.⁸⁵

Evidence suggests that such forms of malfeasance are endemic to contemporary Brazilian politics. By April 2017, one-sixth of the lower house (ninety-one deputies), one-third of the senate (twenty-eight senators), and twelve state governors were under investigation in the scheme.⁸⁶ Of course, not all legislators in favor of impeachment were seeking to insulate themselves from prosecution; even many legislators on the left disavowed Rousseff and the PT in light of the scandal. The impeachment process, however, did little to resolve—and arguably deepened—the political crisis that had been roiling Brazil since Rousseff’s reelection. In May 2017, Brazil was shaken again when the Supreme Court suspended Rousseff’s 2014 opponent, Aécio Neves (PSDB), from his senate seat for soliciting a bribe to cover his legal fees in the corruption investigation.⁸⁷ The day this news broke, a secret recording of Temer was released in which he

⁸³ Renan Ramalho, “STF aceita denúncia para tornar Cunha réu por contas na Suíça,” *Globo*, June 22, 2016, <http://g1.globo.com/politica/operacao-lava-jato/noticia/2016/06/maioria-do-stf-aceita-denuncia-para-tornar-cunha-reu-por-contas-na-suica.html>.

⁸⁴ Alana Fonseca, Bibiana Dionisio, and Thais Kaniak, “Eduardo Cunha é condenado a mais de 15 anos de prisão na Lava Jato,” *Globo*, March 31, 2017, <http://g1.globo.com/bom-dia-brasil/noticia/2017/03/eduardo-cunha-e-condenado-mais-de-15-anos-de-prisao-na-lava-jato.html>.

⁸⁵ “Janot pede prisão de Cunha, Renan Calheiros, Sarney e Romero Jucá,” *Globo*, June 7, 2016, <http://g1.globo.com/bom-dia-brasil/noticia/2016/06/janot-pede-prisao-de-cunha-renan-calheiros-sarney-e-romero-juca.html>; “Liminar afasta Renan Calheiros da Presidência do Senado,” *Notícias STF*, December 5, 2016, <http://www.stf.jus.br/portal/cms/verNoticiaDetalhe.asp?idConteudo=331246>; Renan Ramalho, “STF autoriza 12º inquérito contra o presidente do Senado,” *Globo*, November 18, 2016, <http://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2016/11/toffoli-autoriza-abertura-de-12-inquerito-contra-renan-calheiros.html>.

⁸⁶ Patricia Cagni, “Com a lista de Fachin, mais de 110 políticos passam a ser investigados na Lava Jato,” *UOL*, April 13, 2017, sec. Congresso em Foco, <http://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/noticias/com-a-lista-de-fachin-mais-de-90-parlamentares-passam-a-ser-investigados-na-lava-jato/>.

⁸⁷ Gustavo Garcia, “Aécio Neves é afastado do Senado por ordem de Fachin,” *Globo*, May 18, 2017, <http://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/senado-informa-que-afastou-aecio-apos-ser-notificado-da-decisao-de-fachin.ghtml>.

attempted to buy Cunha's silence; the latter, now imprisoned, had publicly threatened to testify against former allies.⁸⁸

With corruption allegations continuing to swirl, it is far from clear where Brazil's political crisis ends. What is clear, however, is that the corruption scandal—in particular, the efforts of politicians to shield themselves from its prosecutorial reach—shattered the multiparty coalition that offered a measure of governability in a context of hyper-fragmentation. In so doing, it undermined the logic of coalitional presidentialism and left Brazil exposed to the dynamics of institutional gridlock, paralysis, and polarization famously attributed to multiparty presidentialism. Ironically, the scandal culminated in the impeachment of one of the few leading politicians who was not directly implicated in allegations of corruption. Indeed, Rousseff's impeachment had more to do with her unwillingness to provide political and legal cover for corrupt members of her coalition than it did with her own malfeasance. The outcome of this case, therefore, hinged on the tacit expectations that coalition members have of their partners, expectations which condition allied legislative support for minority presidents, and which leave such presidents vulnerable to abandonment or betrayal when left unfulfilled.

The Survival of Michel Temer

If Rousseff's impeachment demonstrates the consequences of an unraveling coalition, then Temer's survival illustrates the benefits of a cohesive one. The contrast between these two presidents provides substantial inferential leverage, since Temer presided over the same political and economic crises that roiled Rousseff's second term, yet with the addition of credible

⁸⁸ "Eduardo Cunha ameaça fazer delação e diz que pode 'explodir' o mundo empresarial," *Folha de S.Paulo*, April 9, 2017, <http://painel.blogfolha.uol.com.br/2017/04/09/eduardo-cunha-ameaca-fazer-delacao-e-diz-que-pode-explodir-o-mundo-empresarial/>.

allegations of his corrupt misdeeds. The public also overwhelmingly supported his impeachment: after Temer was caught red-handed buying Cunha's silence, 81 percent of Brazilians supported his removal—greater support than for Rousseff's impeachment.⁸⁹ If malfeasance or popular demands explained impeachment, then, Temer would have faced similar, if not greater, risks. Yet Temer would not meet Rousseff's fate, despite two separate attempts by the judiciary to remove him from office. In both cases, Temer was shielded by coalition allies in congress, who shared his goal of staving off prosecution.

Though threats to Temer's presidency did not originate in the legislature, these judicial indictments nonetheless offer comparative insight. First, as with legislative impeachment, indictments suspend the sitting president, and conviction can lead to complete removal from office. Second, prosecution of a president can proceed only after a lower-house vote. One can certainly imagine that in the absence of the judiciary's aggressive prosecution, even mere discussions of impeaching Temer would not have occurred. Indeed, after Temer assumed the presidency, more than 25 petitions for his impeachment were submitted, yet Temer's allies were clear that they would consider no such requests.⁹⁰ Thus although prosecutors forced congress's hand, congress was not obliged to acquiesce, and Temer's allies remained veto players exercising discretion over his fate.

This became clear as Temer's legal exposure became undeniable. His corruption and attempt to buy Cunha's silence led to two separate judicial indictments, first in June 2017 on charges of "passive corruption," then in September for obstruction of justice and organized

⁸⁹ Gustavo Simon, "Maioria dos brasileiros pede saída de Michel Temer, afirma Datafolha," *Folha de S.Paulo*, June 24, 2017, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2017/06/1895650-maioria-dos-brasileiros-pede-saida-de-presidente.shtml>.

⁹⁰ Igor Gadelha, Daiene Cardoso, and Isadora Peron, "Maia afirma que vai rejeitar os pedidos de impeachment," *Estadão*, October 28, 2017, <https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,maia-afirma-que-vai-rejeitar-os-pedidos-de-impeachment,70002064158>.

crime.⁹¹ Prosecutors asked the court to remove Temer from office and pay BR\$10 million in fines. And, were investigations to proceed and find Temer guilty, he would be tried by the supreme court, which would investigate him in an expedited trial and whose decisions would be final, leaving Temer with no legal recourse. Were congress not to acquiesce, investigations would be postponed until Temer left office, when he could be tried at a snail's pace, with ample opportunity for lengthy appeals processes.

Thus for Temer—as for his congressional allies in similar jeopardy—deploying all strategies to avoid unfavorable legal circumstances was paramount. Fortunately for Temer he could count on a cohesive coalition to rally congressional opposition to these indictments, in particular from lower house leader Rodrigo Maia of the right-wing *Democratas* party and senate leader Eunício Oliveira of Temer's PMDB, both of whom were personally implicated in the bribery scheme.⁹² Unlike Rousseff, Temer and his coalition partners were aligned in their opposition to investigations.

Twice Temer's allies shielded him from prosecutorial reach, but despite maintaining a right-wing coalition that included his own party, this was not a foregone conclusion. The committee of the congressional justice commission (CCJ), tasked with reviewing indictments and making recommendations for the full chamber vote, was led by Temer's co-partisan Sérgio Zveiter, who announced publicly that he would vote to recommend investigations proceed.⁹³

⁹¹ Afonso Benites, "Rodrigo Janot apresenta segunda denúncia contra Temer," *El País*, September 15, 2017, https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2017/09/14/politica/1505409607_914172.html; Renan Ramalho and Vitor Matos, "Janot apresenta ao Supremo denúncia contra Temer por corrupção passiva," *Globo*, June 26, 2017, <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/janot-apresenta-ao-supremo-denuncia-contra-temer-por-corrupcao.ghtml>.

⁹² Debora Alvares, "Citado em delação, Eunício Oliveira faz acordo para ser eleito com folga," *Folha de S.Paulo*, January 23, 2017, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2017/01/1852189-citado-em-delacao-eunicio-oliveira-faz-amplio-acordo-no-senado.shtml>; "Rodrigo Maia é acusado de corrupção e lavagem de dinheiro pela PF," *Globo*, February 9, 2017, <http://g1.globo.com/bom-dia-brasil/noticia/2017/02/rodrigo-maia-e-acusado-de-corrupcao-e-lavagem-de-dinheiro-pela-pf.html>.

⁹³ João Fellet, "Relator vota pela aceitação de denúncia contra Temer; entenda peso da decisão," *BBC News Brasil*, July 10, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/brasil-40539366>.

Fearing other committee members would do the same, Temer's allies (limited by rules setting quotas for parties in congress) had no choice but to play "political chess," swapping out dissident PMDB deputies and other right-wing politicians who, Temer feared, would vote against him.⁹⁴ The CCJ ultimately defied Zveiter,⁹⁵ but Temer, still fearing the chamber vote, began offering pork to his supposed allies and worked to accelerate the chamber's vote to limit opportunities for critics to voice dissent.⁹⁶ In the end, Temer's coalition remained intact and his first indictment was defeated, but Temer's anxiety surrounding the vote's outcome suggests that coalition management was central to his prevailing.

A similar process played out with Temer's second indictment. Though he survived the first threat, risks remained for Temer, who previously learned that he faced (albeit small) opposition within his own party. Aiming to keep his coalition intact again, Temer and his allies switched from carrots to sticks. Dissident PMDB deputies were stripped of influential cabinet posts following the first vote,⁹⁷ and Zveiter and five other PMDB deputies were suspended from party functions, prompting Zveiter to leave the PMDB altogether.⁹⁸ PMDB leaders also tried to intimidate other potential defectors by expelling "traitors" from the PMDB.⁹⁹ This party resolution failed, but the

⁹⁴ Bernardo Caram and Alessandra Modzeleski, "Partidos da base de Temer fazem novas trocas na CCJ," *Globo*, July 12, 2017, <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/partidos-da-base-de-temer-fazem-novas-trocas-na-ccj.ghtml>.

⁹⁵ Bernardo Caram, Alessandra Modzeleski, and Fernanda Calgaro, "CCJ rejeita parecer que recomendava continuidade da denúncia contra Temer," *Globo*, July 13, 2017, <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/ccj-rejeita-parecer-que-recomendava-continuidade-da-denuncia-contra-temer.ghtml>.

⁹⁶ "Veja estratégias do governo para derrubar inquérito contra Temer na Câmara," *Globo*, July 12, 2017, <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/veja-estrategias-do-governo-para-derrubar-inquerito-contra-temer-na-camara.ghtml>.

⁹⁷ Thiago Faria, "PMDB suspende deputados que votaram a favor de denúncia contra Temer," *UOL*, August 10, 2017, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2017/08/10/pmdb-suspende-deputados-que-votaram-a-favor-de-denuncia-contra-temer.htm>.

⁹⁸ Gustavo Maia, "Relator de denúncia contra Temer deixa PMDB após punição: 'perseguição política,'" *UOL*, August 11, 2017, <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2017/08/11/relator-de-denuncia-contra-temer-deixa-pmdb-apos-punicao-perseguiacao-politica.htm>.

⁹⁹ Juliana Braga, "Divergentes do PMDB podem ficar sem punição na segunda denúncia," *Globo*, October 11, 2017, <https://blogs.oglobo.globo.com/lauro-jardim/post/divergentes-do-pmdb-podem-ficar-sem-punicao-na-segunda-denuncia.html>.

overall strategy was successful: in October, the lower house again voted in Temer's favor, postponing his investigations, keeping him in office, and likely prolonging future prosecution.

Temer's tumultuous presidency shines additional light on the centrality of coalitional dynamics in determining whether presidents are ousted. Crises or malfeasance alone are insufficient to explain impeachment: Temer not only presided over the same scandal Rousseff did, but was himself personally implicated in allegations of corruption. Popular will, moreover, appears to have played little role in congress's actions, as the public overwhelmingly supported Temer's removal through both congressional votes. Also clear in this case is the uncertainty around chamber votes, despite the ideological and partisan alignments between Temer and his coalition. Ultimately, Temer drew upon his "presidential toolkit" to ensure votes went in his favor. Like Rousseff, Temer was vulnerable to impeachment; but unlike her, he maintained a cohesive coalition around shared interests in evading prosecution however possible.

The Survival and Demise of Pedro Kuczynski

Finally, we turn to Pedro Kuczynski, the center-right President of Peru, who evaded one impeachment threat only to succumb to a second. Like Temer, Kuczynski faced dismal public approval ratings, was ideologically aligned with the congressional veto players, and was twice threatened with impeachment as evidence of his misdeeds emerged.¹⁰⁰ But unlike Temer, Kuczynski was without a governing coalition in congress. He narrowly managed to survive the first impeachment threat by capitalizing on factional rivalries within the Popular Force (FP), the main congressional opposition party of Keiko Fujimori, Kuczynski's opponent in the 2016 election. But with revelations that Kuczynski's survival was the product of a corrupt bargain

¹⁰⁰ "Encuesta de Opinión Pública a Nivel Nacional Marzo 2018" (Datum Internacional, March 2018).

between himself and congressional politicians, the fragile and opportunistic alliance he forged was quickly shattered, ultimately sealing his fate.

With the main opposition party holding an outright majority in congress, Kuczynski struggled to govern effectively from the start of his term. Kuczynski assumed office in 2016 after narrowly defeating right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori, daughter of the former populist and authoritarian leader Alberto Fujimori. Despite winning the presidency, Kuczynski's personal party vehicle, Peruvians for Change (PPK), held only 14 percent of seats in the legislature, and opposition from Fujimori's FP was fierce. Kuczynski struggled to enact his agenda and was under near-constant congressional investigation, which upended his administration and forced several cabinet members to resign.¹⁰¹

Under these circumstances, Kuczynski would seem to be particularly vulnerable to impeachment: not only did he lack a legislative shield, but poor approval ratings and public support for impeachment gave the opposition political cover. Yet removing a sitting president would prove difficult even for the majority opposition. While support from only a minority of congress is needed to begin proceedings, congress must ultimately convict with a two-thirds majority—a threshold the FP could reach only in concert with other parties and coalitions, and while remaining cohesive itself.

Thus when news broke that Kuczynski was involved in a bribery scheme with Brazilian engineering firm Odebrecht—allegations he unequivocally and continually denied—he sought to evade impeachment by forging an alliance with dissident politicians within the FP. Specifically, Kuczynski capitalized on a political rivalry between Fujimori siblings, Keiko and her brother, sitting FP congressman Kenji. Even before the 2016 election, their rivalry had spilled over into

¹⁰¹ “Los ministros que dejaron el Gabinete en el gobierno de PPK,” *El Comercio*, January 5, 2018, <https://elcomercio.pe/politica/ministros-dejaron-gabinete-gobierno-ppk-fotos-noticia-486194>.

public view.¹⁰² Keiko and Kenji were divided in particular on whether to seek a pardon for their father, former leader Alberto Fujimori, himself imprisoned on charges of corruption and human rights violations. Kenji, leading a small but rebellious faction within the FP, favored a pardon, but Keiko, fearing her father's return to public life would undermine her role as the public face of the party, remained opposed.¹⁰³

Eyeing this fragmentation, Kuczynski was well aware of the political leverage his pardon authority offered.¹⁰⁴ As allegations and testimonies continued to emerge implicating Kuczynski in corruption,¹⁰⁵ Kuczynski sought an alliance with Kenji, who happened to be facing punishment from his party for noncompliance.¹⁰⁶ Finally, in December 2017, congressional investigators revealed testimony of Odebrecht executives saying Kuczynski was directly involved in the bribery scheme.¹⁰⁷ The opposition in congress moved swiftly, introducing impeachment proceedings one week later.¹⁰⁸ Proceedings were easily approved, though not without interruption by Kenji, who took to the floor of congress to implore his fellow legislators to respect due process, and to allow Kuczynski an opportunity for self-defense before proceeding.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² Jacqueline Fowks, "Kenji Fujimori não foi votar na sua irmã," *El País*, June 7, 2016, https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2016/06/06/internacional/1465172320_592925.html.

¹⁰³ Jacqueline Fowks and Carlos Cué, "Os Fujimori, um drama familiar que domina o Peru," *El País*, December 31, 2017, https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2017/12/31/internacional/1514675499_181175.html.

¹⁰⁴ "PPK y Kenji Fujimori se encontraron de forma casual: ¿qué se dijeron?," *La República*, July 7, 2017, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/893106-ppk-converso-con-kenji-fujimori-que-se-dijeron>.

¹⁰⁵ "La Lista Negada," *Caretas*, November 30, 2017, http://caretas.pe/politica/81016-la_lista_negada; "Comisión Lava Jato pide a PPK que se pronuncie sobre vínculos con Odebrecht," November 30, 2017, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/1152081-comision-lava-jato-pide-a-ppk-que-se-pronuncie-sobre-vinculos-con-odebrecht>.

¹⁰⁶ "Kenji Fujimori fue nuevamente suspendido 120 días por Fuerza Popular," *La República*, November 28, 2017, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/1151390-fuerza-popular-suspende-a-kenji-fujimori-por-120-dias>.

¹⁰⁷ "Odebrecht Afirma Que Pagó US\$782,000 a PPK," *Caretas*, December 7, 2017, http://caretas.pe/politica/81199-odebrecht-afirma-que-pago-us_782_000_a_ppk.

¹⁰⁸ "Presentan Moción de Vacancia Presidencial," *Caretas*, December 15, 2017, <http://caretas.pe/politica/81207-presentan-mocion-de-vacancia-presidencial>.

¹⁰⁹ "Kenji Fujimori exhorta al Congreso 'respetar presunción de inocencia' de PPK," *La República*, December 15, 2017, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/1158313-kenji-fujimori-exhorta-al-congreso-respetar-presuncion-de-inocencia-de-ppk-video>.

As congress prepared for an impeachment vote one week later, on December 21, Kuczynski openly declared the proceedings a coup attempt.¹¹⁰ While the opposition seemed determined to impeach, fragmentation on the left and right cast doubt on the vote: the left was reluctant lest the FP capitalize on Kuczynski's removal to consolidate power, and rival factions within the opposition threatened their numerical advantage. When votes were cast, the opposition fell short of the two-thirds majority needed by nine votes.¹¹¹ Leftist parties abstained, as did Kenji and nine other FP politicians who defected from the FP.¹¹² Kuczynski's alliance with Kenji's rebellious faction of 10 votes thus proved decisive to his survival.

Three days later, Kuczynski upheld his end of the bargain and pardoned Alberto Fujimori for "humanitarian reasons,"¹¹³ prompting further decline in his approval ratings and large-scale protests in the streets.¹¹⁴ Kuczynski's political woes would only worsen, as the congressional investigative committee announced new revelations of corruption along with new impeachment proceedings.¹¹⁵ Making matters worse, the opposition rebuffed accusations of acting without cause by releasing videos in which Kuczynski's lawyer was caught offering pork to Kenji and other

¹¹⁰ "PPK: 'Estamos ante un golpe disfrazado de interpretaciones,'" *La República*, December 20, 2017, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/1160187-presidente-kuczynski-brindara-un-mensaje-a-la-nacion-esta-noche>.

¹¹¹ "PPK se queda: Congreso no consigue los votos y el fujimorismo fracasa," *La República*, December 22, 2017, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/1160646-ppk-vacancia-presidencial-en-vivo-congreso>.

¹¹² Alexander Villarroel Zurita, "Los fujimoristas que se abstuvieron de votar por la vacancia de PPK," *El Comercio*, December 22, 2017, <https://elcomercio.pe/politica/fujimoristas-abstuvieron-votar-vacancia-ppk-noticia-483484>.

¹¹³ "Alberto Fujimori recibe indulto y Kenji muestra el preciso instante," *La República*, December 25, 2017, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/1162244-alberto-fujimori-recibe-el-indulto-y-kenji-graba-el-preciso-momento-video>.

¹¹⁴ "Encuesta de Opinión Pública a Nivel Nacional Enero 2018" (Datum Internacional, January 12, 2018); "Alberto Fujimori: Miles Marcharon Contra Indulto y En Rechazo a PPK," *La República*, December 28, 2017, <https://larepublica.pe/sociedad/1163483-marcha-contra-indulto-de-alberto-fujimori-en-vivo-miles-salen-a-las-calles-este-jueves>.

¹¹⁵ "Vacancia presidencial: presentaron moción multipartidaria contra PPK," *La República*, March 8, 2018, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/1208305-vacancia-presidencial-hoy-presentan-en-el-congreso-mocion-multipartidaria-contra-ppk>; "Congreso admitió nueva moción de vacancia presidencial contra PPK," *La República*, March 15, 2018, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/1211898-vacancia-presidencial-pleno-del-congreso-debatira-hoy-admision-a-la-mocion-contra-ppk>.

legislators in exchange for votes in opposition to impeachment.¹¹⁶ Not only did the videos make clear that Kuczynski's initial survival was the product of backroom politicking, but these revelations deprived Kuczynski of the same tools to evade impeachment a second time. With his impeachment vote set and his demise inevitable, Kuczynski resigned from office on March 21.

CONCLUSION

Presidential impeachments are not readily explained by such factors as crisis or scandal, mass protest, or minority presidential status. While all present in Rousseff's case, her impeachment is only indirectly attributable to these factors. In Lugo's case, impeachment was carried out despite the absence of mass mobilization, public demand, economic crisis, or legal wrongdoing on the part of the president. The cases of Temer and Kuczynski also highlight that presidents cannot safely assume that partisan or ideological alignments will protect them in the face of serious challenges to their presidencies. Only Temer, who shared with his coalition partners a strong interest in remaining out of prosecutorial reach, was able to successfully evade impeachment threats. In the cases of Lugo and Rousseff, the legislative shields seemingly provided by their governing coalitions quickly became legislative swords.

Recent presidential impeachments in Latin America demonstrate the tenuous character of multiparty governing coalitions forged by minority presidents. The political pacts that brought together multiple parties under coalitional presidentialism were highly tactical in nature. Indeed, they were contingent on tacit assumptions that presidents would protect or support the personal and partisan interests of coalition partners who shared few, if any, of the president's political or

¹¹⁶ "Videos demostrarían supuesta compra de votos para evitar vacancia de PPK," *La República*, March 20, 2018, <https://larepublica.pe/politica/1214572-fuerza-popular-presenta-pruebas-de-supuesta-compra-votos-por-gobierno-video>.

programmatic commitments. The internal cohesion of these coalitions was reasonably robust—even in contexts of economic crisis, corruption scandals, social protest, and ideological conflict—so long as presidents tended to the interests of their partners. Coalitions quickly disintegrated, however, once allies lost confidence in the president’s willingness to safeguard their interests. Sudden defections left presidents vulnerable to impeachment proceedings that were predicated on the loss of political support more than transparent legal transgressions by the executive branch.

Our small-N research design provided leverage in tracing the causal processes behind presidential impeachments, but it also raises the question of whether our findings are a product of case selection. There is no clear reason, however, to suspect that these cases of impeachment differ significantly from those analyzed in previous studies. These cases meet the scope conditions of minority presidential status and the presence of crisis or scandal theorized in prior research, but we avoided selecting cases on the dependent variable, allowing our qualitative analyses to better evaluate causal propositions and mechanisms. One limitation of our small-N approach is the inability to consider the universe of cases in equal depth; but other qualitative analyses suggest that coalitional dynamics are present in other cases as well. In Llanos and Marsteintredet’s volume on presidential breakdowns, for example, contributors’ case studies of the impeachments of Carlos Andrés Pérez in Venezuela, Fernando Collor in Brazil, and Raúl Cubas in Paraguay all provide evidence that supports the coalitional politics argument.¹¹⁷ Evidence from prior cases thus suggests that intra-coalitional politics is not a new dynamic that has emerged more recently, but rather a central factor that had not previously been treated as such. In any case, more systematic and fine-

¹¹⁷ Mariana Llanos and Leiv Marsteintredet, eds., *Presidential Breakdowns in Latin America: Causes and Outcomes of Executive Instability in Developing Democracies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Also see Carlos Pereira, Timothy J. Power, and Eric D. Raile, “Presidentialism, Coalitions, and Accountability,” in *Corruption and Democracy in Brazil: The Struggle for Accountability*, ed. Timothy J. Power and Matthew M. Taylor (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 31–55; Valenzuela, “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted.”

grained analyses of impeachments and our propositions would be welcome additions to this literature.

Finally, this analysis carries important implications for democratic stability and accountability, and raises questions about how impeachment and coalitional presidentialism shape these outcomes, for better or for worse. In the impeachment literature, consensus has emerged that impeachment “flexibilizes” presidentialism¹¹⁸ and helps avoid democratic breakdowns by allowing presidents to be removed by constitutional means. Surely this is the case, but outcomes short of regime breakdown may not necessarily signal functional democratic institutions. Indeed, our analysis offers a less sanguine view of how coalitional politics shapes the ability or willingness of legislatures to exercise horizontal accountability in good faith.

In the cases analyzed here, impeachment was not deployed primarily to remove malfeasant presidents from office. Instead, strategic and opportunistic politicians seeking to protect themselves retaliated against those who threatened or failed to defend their interests. Publics demanding removal saw their will carried out only when they were aligned with the interests of elites in power. And even in the absence of such public demand, elites can manufacture contorted charges to justify the impeachment of democratically elected presidents. So too can they employ legislative and investigatory machinery to shield malfeasant presidents from prosecutorial reach—a noteworthy lesson for observers of contemporary U.S. democracy. In these cases, then, coalitional presidentialism did not necessarily enhance the rule of law or the quality of representation in multiparty presidential systems, raising doubts about its contributions to democratic stability.¹¹⁹ Indeed, it may have *contributed* to political instability and institutional

¹¹⁸ Leiv Marsteintredet and Einar Berntzen, “Reducing the Perils of Presidentialism in Latin America through Presidential Interruptions,” *Comparative Politics* 41, no. 1 (2008): 83–101.

¹¹⁹ Chaisty, Cheeseman, and Power, *Coalitional Presidentialism*.

disfunction by allowing legislatures to undermine popular will and neglect their duty of holding malfeasant presidents to account. Impeachment, therefore, can be a mechanism of horizontal accountability, but it can also be weaponized as a highly politicized and opportunistic tool for advancing or safeguarding the interests of political elites, whether personal or partisan. Such divergent outcomes rest on the contingencies of elite political behavior and coalitional dynamics, far more than the design of the institutions themselves.