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PARAGUAY AND THE POLITICS OF IMPEACHMENT

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On 22 June 2012, Fernando Lugo of the Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC) became the sixteenth president of a Latin American democracy since the “third wave” of democratization began in the region to have his term end before scheduled. He also became the second such “interrupted president” in Paraguay since 1999, when Raúl Cubas resigned just ahead of an impeachment vote that came after less than a year in office.¹ Lugo, a former Roman Catholic bishop whose 2008 election as a left-of-center candidate had ended 61 years of Colorado Party rule, was impeached by the Chamber of Deputies and removed from office by the Senate—in each case through an overwhelming majority vote—just ten months before the 21 April 2013 presidential election.

Lugo’s impeachment was triggered by a violent clash between police and landless peasants occupying contested land in the Curuguaty district on 15 June 2012. The incident left eleven protesters and six police officers dead. Within a week, on June 21, the Chamber of Deputies had played its role as accuser and, in a vote of 76 to 1 (with 3 abstentions), impeached Lugo for “poor performance of duties.” The next day, the Senate voted 39 to 4 (with 2 abstentions) to strip him of his office. Although Lugo disagreed with the decision, he initially accepted it. Under the constitution, Lugo’s vice-president, Federico Franco of the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (known as the Liberal Party or PLRA), stepped up to the presidency.

The international response, spearheaded by the leaders of the South

American left, was swift condemnation. Argentina's President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner called the events a "soft coup," and the late Hugo Chávez of Venezuela likened them to the coup that had deposed Honduran president Manuel Zelaya in 2009. Others spoke of a "parliamentary" or "institutional" coup, and decried a growing *neo-golpista* trend in Latin America. Claiming a breach of the democratic order in Paraguay, the regional trade organization Mercosur (Southern Cone Common Market) and the political and economic alliance Unasur (Union of South American Nations) both suspended Paraguay until after the April 2013 election. Less negative responses came from the United States, Central America, Europe, and the Organization of American States (OAS), which did not suspend Paraguay but expressed concern and sent a diplomatic mission to investigate the incident.

The varied reactions from abroad to Lugo's impeachment and the comparisons between his ouster and Zelaya's beg for an analysis that situates Lugo's downfall in a comparative context. The Lugo case is an example of a phenomenon known as the "interrupted presidency," or "presidential breakdown," which has become the main form of presidential instability in Latin America.² We define an interrupted presidency as one in which an elected incumbent is forced to make an extraordinary exit from power before the end of a constitutionally fixed term. In contrast to the coups that swept the region in the 1960s and 1970s, the interruption of a presidential term does not lead to a rupture of the democratic order. Nonetheless, the sixteen cases (so far) of this phenomenon are quite varied, with many occurring in a gray zone between regular constitutional forms of removal and succession and the historical moderator coups, in which the military intervened in civilian politics to unseat one civilian president and install another.

Lugo's impeachment follows the common pattern of a president who loses the support of the legislative body in the wake of a political crisis or a scandal involving the president or the government. Given that Lugo's position vis-à-vis the legislature was never strong, it is no surprise that the opposition struck when the opportunity arose and that Lugo was not able to withstand the attack.

Procedurally, then, the Lugo incident falls into the most conventional category of constitutional presidential removals—that is, those undertaken via the impeachment process in a national legislature. Yet the Paraguayan Congress used this constitutional mechanism in a way that resembles other presidential interruptions in which legislatures resorted to creative readings of the constitution to mount political no-confidence votes quite similar to those seen in parliamentary regimes. Three things, however, set Lugo's case apart: 1) Impeachment was used as a political weapon. 2) There were strongly negative international reactions to what was, after all, the legal (even if unwise) deposition of a president.

And finally, 3) the quick response of South American presidents acting through Unasur and Mercosur rapidly sidelined the OAS.

The Rise and Fall of Fernando Lugo

Along with Honduras, Paraguay has one of Latin America's oldest and most conservative party systems. At its core are two main parties, both formed in 1887—the Alianza Nacional Revolucionaria (as the Colorado Party is formally known) and the PLRA. Both are state-based clientelist parties marked by ample factionalism. For more than sixty years—despite different institutional scenarios, including the military dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner (1954–89) and the democratic period that began in 1989 with his overthrow by a military coup—party continuity has characterized Paraguayan politics. From 1947 until Lugo's election in 2008, the Colorado Party controlled the Paraguayan state. The Liberal Party, in opposition, also became clientelist, although it controlled smaller portions of the state. In addition, the two traditional parties were ideologically close and predominantly right of center, as were the country's smaller parties.

When Lugo, running as the APC standard-bearer with the Liberal Federico Franco as his ticketmate, won the 2008 presidential contest with 41 percent of the vote in a three-person race, he shook up Paraguayan politics in more ways than one. Not only did he become the first non-Colorado president in sixty years, but the former prelate inspired by liberation theology belonged to neither of the two main political camps and held views far to the left of both. Lugo's position in the governing APC coalition was weak; his base of support was the small, center-left Tekojoja Popular Party (which later merged into the Guasú Front). Whatever Lugo's ambitious reform plans, the traditional Liberal Party dominated his coalition: The Liberals had won about 60 percent of the coalition's votes and more than 80 percent of its congressional seats.³ Moreover, the APC held only a minority in both chambers—one vote shy of a majority in the 45-seat Senate and six votes short of a majority in the 80-seat Chamber of Deputies.

Lugo's path, therefore, was always uphill. He scored some victories in the areas of anticorruption, health, social issues, and the renegotiation of the important Itaipú Dam treaty with Brazil, but his key campaign promise—land reform—faced deadlock.⁴ Strong, entrenched interests moved to block his proposals with help from both the Colorados in opposition and the Liberals in government. In a country whose agricultural sector accounts for 23 percent of GDP and employs 26.5 percent of the labor force, but in which a mere 2 percent of the populace owns more than 80 percent of the land, conflicts over land distribution are numerous and escalating. Such conflicts—including violent invasions by landless peasants and evictions—were recurrent during the presidencies

of Lugo's predecessors Luis González Macchi (1999–2003) and Nicanor Duarte Frutos (2003–2008). But during Lugo's presidency, a small guerrilla group called the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP) became more active, putting the president in constant crossfire from the right and the left over the land issue. Finally, in addition to being unable to deliver on his campaign promise of land reform, during his presidency Lugo also had to deal with lymphatic cancer as well as fight several paternity claims from his time as a bishop.

Less than a year after Lugo's inauguration, the Colorados launched the first of numerous attempts to impeach him. With his position in the ruling coalition so weak, Lugo had to rely on the Liberals to carry out his agenda and shield him from the opposition. In view of their old rivalry with the Colorados—and thanks as well to Lugo's initial popularity—the PLRA found it politically convenient to support the president. The coalition partners, however, stood far apart politically, and their internal relations were troubled. Lugo at first underrated the PLRA's importance as senior coalition partner, giving Liberals fewer than half the seats in his cabinet. He also tried to isolate Vice-President Franco by choosing the PLRA ministers from the ranks of Liberals who belonged to intraparty factions other than Franco's own. Predictably, this led to tensions; Lugo and Franco often criticized each other openly.

When contending with Colorado challenges, Lugo often used the distribution of executive posts as a stabilizing mechanism. This calmed the Colorados only for a time, however, and frustrated Lugo's own coalition. Moreover, the president's popularity, which had helped to hold the fragile coalition together, began to decline. Confidence in government plummeted from a record 84 percent in 2009 to just 37 percent by December 2011.⁵ The Liberals cast a worried eye ahead to the April 2013 general election and became alert for an opportunity to abandon Lugo.

It came in June 2012, when police tried to evict a group of landless peasants who were occupying contested land claimed by the wealthy former Colorado senator Blas Riquelme (who died three months later). The details of the ensuing confrontation in Curuguaty (about 300 kilometers east of the national capital, Asunción) remain murky. The police claim that they were attacked by members of the EPP, while the landless movement maintains that it was infiltrated by unknown provocateurs. What is clear is that seventeen people died.

More than the actual killings, however, it was Lugo's handling of the crisis that finally shattered his troubled coalition. The president promptly removed both the chief of the national police and Interior Minister Carlos Filizzola. To take the latter's place Lugo named Rubén Candia Amarilla, a controversial Colorado figure and attorney-general under Nicanor Duarte's presidency.⁶ This set off shock waves in both the government and opposition camps. The Colorados' presumptive presidential candidate, Horacio Cartes, fiercely resented what he saw as Lugo's

meddling in the contest for the Colorados' 2013 presidential nomination. Meanwhile, the Liberals and Lugo's own Guasú Front objected to Amarilla because of his ties to the Colorados. With this one ministerial nomination, Lugo managed to unite against himself two longstanding mutual rivals.

Thus when the Colorados again threatened impeachment the Liberals joined them, leaving Lugo with virtually no congressional support. In keeping with Article 225 of the 1992 Constitution, which allows impeachment in cases of "poor performance of duties" (*mal desempeño de sus funciones*), the Chamber of Deputies voted to impeach the president on June 21. The lower house held Lugo responsible for the Curuguaty deaths and found him guilty on four other counts of political wrongdoing. In sum, the Chamber held Lugo politically responsible for bringing chaos and instability to the country.⁷

The next day, the Senate brushed aside international pressure that included a plea for delay from the Mercosur foreign ministers and voted Lugo out. Even though an overwhelming congressional majority had supported the impeachment, the hasty 24-hour process as well as the scant two hours that Lugo was given to present his defense drew criticism from throughout the hemisphere. Lugo himself at first accepted the decision but later appealed to the Supreme Court, citing the Paraguayan constitution's due-process guarantee. The Court, reasoning that impeachment is a political process under the purview of Congress, quickly rejected the appeal.

The International Response

International condemnation of Lugo's ouster came quickly. Several South American countries said that allowing the president a mere 24 hours to prepare his defense made a mockery of the impeachment process and revealed that it was really an institutional coup. Chávez offered the strongest rebuke by equating Lugo's removal with the 2009 coup against Zelaya. Some countries also withdrew their ambassadors. On June 29, during a joint Unasur-Mercosur summit in Mendoza, Argentina, both organizations decided to suspend Paraguay for having violated their respective democracy clauses, but imposed no further sanctions. The suspension was to last until the reestablishment of a legitimate government in Paraguay after the 2013 presidential election. Additionally, Unasur installed a commission, headed by former Peruvian prime minister Salomón Lerner, to monitor political developments in Paraguay.

The strong reactions were not driven solely by an altruistic love of democracy. The Mercosur countries took advantage of Paraguay's suspension to admit Venezuela, whose Mercosur candidacy had been awaiting ratification by the Paraguayan Senate since 2006. Venezuela's membership in Mercosur became official on 31 July 2012 during

a special presidential summit in Brasilia. The Paraguayan government, meanwhile, protested its suspension from Mercosur, arguing that it had been denied the right to defend itself as set forth in the Ushuaia Protocol on Democratic Commitment. In brief, Paraguay charged Mercosur with applying a double standard: If it was going to criticize Paraguay for denying Lugo enough time to prepare his defense, how could it suspend Paraguay's membership with such unseemly haste? Paraguayan officials also condemned Venezuela's admission to Mercosur without ratification by the Paraguayan Congress as a violation of the organization's treaties.⁸

Clearly, the other Mercosur countries had economic reasons for wanting Venezuela admitted—and hence for suspending Paraguay: Venezuela is a major oil supplier as well as an attractive export market. For Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff, adding Venezuela was a way to strengthen Mercosur's position in the world economy and global political scene. Brazilian industry and Argentine agribusiness would gain easier access to the Venezuelan market. Moreover, it is understandable that the other member states, whose legislatures had long ago ratified Venezuela's entry, were upset by Paraguay's refusal, which they traced to internal partisan conflicts and Paraguayan distrust of the Chávez regime. Indeed, the other Mercosur countries had already tried and failed to find a way around Paraguay's Senate. So Lugo's impeachment became a convenient solution to a longstanding problem for Mercosur and its members, and, some argued, a campaign gift for Hugo Chávez in Venezuela's October 2012 presidential election.

Justified or not, the sudden suspension that Mercosur and Unasur slapped on Paraguay forced other actors to respond not only to the situation in Paraguay, but also to the South American organizations' response to the situation. Indeed, Unasur was making a move to displace the OAS as South America's "go-to" group on matters of security, conflict mediation, and the defense of democracy. While Unasur responded to the Lugo impeachment within a week, the OAS took more than two weeks to assess matters and opt against suspending Paraguay.⁹ The OAS instead sent an observer mission to help the country prepare for the 2013 elections, foster political dialogue, and keep OAS member states informed. The U.S. government backed this decision, and some Central American countries also criticized the decisions taken by Unasur and Mercosur. Although critical of the haste that marked the impeachment process, the OAS noted that things had been done in accord with Paraguay's constitution. Furthermore, the OAS pointed out, Lugo himself had accepted the outcome, at least at first.

Nonetheless, Unasur's and Mercosur's speedy actions left the OAS standing by the roadside. How a critical episode is defined and interpreted at the outset is key, for this determines what actions will be taken in regard to the country in question. Unasur showed that when it

comes to South American political developments, it can and will act more quickly than either the OAS or the United States. Moreover, the Paraguayan crisis made it plain that presidential summits produce decisions faster than does OAS-style diplomacy. The degree of self-interest that was at work in Mercosur and Unasur's decision making raises some concerns about what the sidelining of the OAS may mean for future efforts to defend democracy in the Western Hemisphere. These concerns are substantiated by the contradictory behavior and double standards of governments—Argentina's and Ecuador's come to mind—that cry out in defense of democratic rule in South America while not always playing by the rules of liberal democracy at home (when it comes to press freedom, for instance).

A Comparative Perspective

As noted above, Lugo's became the sixteenth interrupted presidency in Latin America during the third wave. His impeachment, however, was only the fourth successful impeachment attempt in the same period.¹⁰ Procedurally, therefore, the Lugo incident belongs to the group of constitutionally correct presidential removals—that is, those undertaken via impeachment. Yet the blatantly political motives behind the Paraguayan Congress's use of this constitutional mechanism makes the Lugo episode resemble many of the other less constitutionally defensible cases. In most Latin American presidential breakdowns, the procedures used to remove a president have generated controversy, and several presidents have been unseated through democratically more dubious processes than Lugo's impeachment. With this in mind, the relatively strong hemispheric condemnation of the impeachment stands out even more.

Presidentialism is defined by fixed terms for both the president and the legislature, and the direct election of these two branches. As a result, the president is not dependent on congressional confidence for survival, and the presidential system is expected to provide governmental stability. Nevertheless, the premature removal of a president is provided for in presidential constitutions as an extraordinary solution to a crisis. While all presidential breakdowns are examples of other institutions or social actors holding presidents to account, the procedure by which presidents fall is important from a democratic perspective.

Within presidentialism, there are three procedures for removing the chief executive. The best known is impeachment, which is employed if the president is accused of any unlawful activity and which requires various levels of a qualified majority to pass (in Paraguay, a two-thirds majority in both houses of congress). The second and more rarely invoked procedure involves a declaration (typically by congress) that the president has become incapable of discharging the presidency's duties or has abandoned them. Provisions for presidential incapacity exist in

**TABLE—WHO REMOVED LATIN AMERICAN PRESIDENTS
AND BY WHICH PROCEDURE?**

Congress	
Impeachment	Collor (1992, Brazil) Pérez (1993, Venezuela) Cubas (1999, Paraguay) Lugo (2012, Paraguay)
Incapacity/Abandoned Post	Bucaram (1997, Ecuador) Gutiérrez (2005, Ecuador)
President's Volition After Pressure	
Resignation	Alfonsín (1989, Argentina) De la Rúa (2001, Argentina) Serrano (1993, Guatemala) Fujimori (2000, Peru) Sánchez (2003, Bolivia) Mesa (2005, Bolivia)
Resignation and Early Elections	Siles Zuazo (1985, Bolivia) Balaguer (1996, Dominican Republic)
Military	
Coups	Mahud (2000, Ecuador) Zelaya (2009, Honduras)

Note: We exclude here the coups in Haiti since they ended democracy (which was not the case in Honduras and Ecuador), as well as Argentine president Duhalde's resignation and call for early elections since he was not popularly elected.

most constitutions and, like impeachment, usually require a qualified majority to pass.¹¹ The final method is recall by popular vote, which only a few constitutions allow. The only example of its use is that of Venezuela, where Chávez survived a recall vote in 2004. Then too, of course, a president may leave office early by resigning.

The Table above lists all popularly elected interrupted presidents in Latin America during the current democratic period and organizes them according to the procedure that was used to force the president out. Impeachment is rarely used, for two reasons. First, the large legislative majorities needed are hard to attain, especially given the expected loyalty of the president's own party. Second, while impeachment may be a political rather than a judicial process, it is generally used to accuse a president of unlawful behavior and thus requires hard evidence of willful wrongdoing. Both Brazilian president Fernando Collor de Melo (1990–92) and Venezuelan president Carlos Andrés Pérez (1989–93) lost their presidencies due to proven corruption, while Paraguay's Raúl Cubas (1998–99) was removed for the unconstitutional release from prison of former coupmaker General Lino Oviedo and was also accused of orchestrating the murder of his own vice-president.¹² In comparison, the accusations made against Lugo were clearly political, and it is hard to argue that the president himself had violated any law. This case underlines the political nature of im-

peachment, which fittingly is called a *juicio político* (political judgment) in Spanish. The bottom line is that Lugo had lost support from the major parties in Congress, and the opposition used the constitutionally available procedure of impeachment to remove him. The case also demonstrates that presidents need a minimum level of confidence in the legislature to shield themselves against impeachment.

While the use of impeachment is an established procedure in presidential democracies, the remaining mechanisms may offer reasons for greater concern. Two Ecuadorian presidents, Abdalá Bucaram in 1997 and Lucio Gutiérrez in 2005, fell due to congressional declarations—that the former had become mentally incapable and that the latter had abandoned the office. Ecuador's Congress decided, the constitution being silent on the issue, that cases of presidential incapacity and abandonment of office required only a simple majority vote to remove the president from office. This of course made such declarations easier to achieve than impeachment. The motives behind the removals in Ecuador, however, were primarily political, as they were in Paraguay. The Ecuadorian Congress declared Bucaram (who ironically had gloried in the nickname "El Loco") mentally incapable even though he was probably as sane as most other politicians in the country. Eight years later, legislators would claim that Gutiérrez had abandoned his post even though he was sitting in his office as Congress voted. As in Paraguay, in these Ecuadorian cases there was a political aim impelling the use of a constitutional instrument not designed as a vote of no confidence. Whether one condones or condemns these practices, they show that Latin American congresses are using creative readings of convenient constitutional provisions in order to stage political no-confidence votes similar to those held in parliamentary regimes.

Whatever the motives involved, the decisions in the cases cited above were taken by democratically elected legislatures, which in presidential regimes enjoy the same amount of democratic legitimacy as an elected president. In most of the cases in the Table, however, the president left office by resigning. These were, in reality, forced resignations: These presidents stepped down under popular and congressional pressure, with no vote of congress to legitimize the fall.¹³ And, as Aníbal Pérez-Liñán writes, "there is no clear democratic principle to support the argument that protests should trump votes."¹⁴ Given that these forced resignations—excluding those of Guatemala's Jorge Serrano (1993), Peru's Alberto Fujimori (2000), and the Dominican Republic's Joaquín Balaguer (1996), who all fell due to their breaches of democratic rule—were instances of a semi-loyal opposition bringing down an elected government, they should concern advocates of democracy. By contrast, a democratically elected congress is entitled—whatever its underlying motives—to remove a president within the framework of the constitutional rules.

Only two cases—those of Ecuadorian president Jamil Mahuad in 2000 and Zelaya in 2009—can be defined unequivocally as coups. Due

to international pressure, the democratic regimes in both countries survived and were soon made to resume constitutional rule. These cases are exceptional because the countries' respective militaries played a part in

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the removal of both presidents. Even though Chávez equated Lugo's impeachment with the coup against Zelaya, procedurally the cases are a world apart. Comparing the cases is nevertheless illuminating and highlights the importance of democratic procedures during government crises. Both countries are notable for their relatively stable and conservative party systems and elites. Both Zelaya and Lugo tried to make their respective governments take a leftist turn—Zelaya from within the traditional party system and Lugo from outside it. In both cases, the pres-

idents lost all parliamentary support and were isolated, and the conservative parties vetoed the "left turns" by promoting the removal of the presidents.

In presidential regimes with consolidated party systems, such as those of Paraguay and Honduras, traditional elites monopolize political representation. The first-past-the-post system for electing presidents may allow outsiders to win, but it does not secure them support in congress. In other words, the system provides for enlarged representation, but not necessarily for the means to govern. The leader and his party must govern by forging alliances and adopting a negotiated, and potentially less radical, agenda. Lugo failed on both counts, as had Zelaya and other fallen presidents before him.

Zelaya's opponents in Honduras discovered, however, that they could not legitimize his overthrow to the international community despite several votes of Congress confirming his military ouster after the fact, and a Supreme Court decision ruling that the coup had been constitutional. In Paraguay, by contrast, the democratically elected Congress—with its votes to impeach and remove the president—deposed Lugo via legal means, and force was never used. Although the hurried impeachment process and the political motivations that drove it clearly weakened the legitimacy of the opposition's actions, the use of this constitutional mechanism does not qualify as a coup.

This explains the OAS's moderate reaction to Lugo's removal. Although rules were bent during the impeachment process, the OAS considered the act to be constitutional and not a breach of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Had the president violated the constitution, as Serrano, Fujimori, and Balaguer had done, the OAS would have applied

pressure for Lugo's removal. Likewise, had the opposition acted undemocratically, the OAS would have tried to negotiate a solution that would safeguard the president against interruption (as the OAS attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, in the case of Bolivia's Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003), and condemned and sanctioned the actions after the fact (as in the cases of Mahuad and Zelaya). In most cases, however, external involvement has been minimal and limited mostly to declarations of support for democracy.¹⁵

Why, then, did the other international actors see Lugo's impeachment as a coup at the outset? In addition to the reasons listed above, OAS secretary-general José Insulza claims that as a consequence of the region's history of interrupted presidencies, "demands for democracy are now more marked, and the sudden ouster of a president produces almost automatic rejection."¹⁶ The anti-Zelaya coup may have been a tipping point of sorts against tolerance for presidential interruptions. Zelaya's overthrow underlined the dangerous possibility that Latin American militaries might start stepping into tense political situations in order to play "moderator" or referee—a prospect to be avoided at all costs. Unasur and Mercosur may have gone too far (and for the "wrong" reasons) by suspending Paraguay's membership, but if the OAS had failed to criticize the Lugo impeachment, the organization would have risked inadvertently encouraging other actors to begin using extraconstitutional means to remove presidents. If the OAS and other organizations automatically reject any type of presidential ouster, however, they may end up having to defend presidents who endanger democracy (Fujimori, for example) or having to interfere in the sovereign affairs of democratic nation-states.

Impeachment Politics: Paraguay and Beyond

With Lugo's fall, Paraguay joins Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador in the club of countries that have faced multiple interrupted presidencies. Like the presidents in those countries, Lugo fell for primarily political reasons. One might argue that the killings in Curuguaty warranted impeachment, but there remains little doubt that the Curuguaty affair was only the trigger of the impeachment, not the underlying cause. Despite domestic and international turmoil, however, Paraguayan democracy survived. The country followed the regional pattern after other presidential breakdowns, returning to democratic norms quickly with the general elections of 21 April 2013, which brought the Colorado Party back to power.

In general, the 2013 balloting was carried out in a democratic manner. The 68.5 percent turnout for the presidential contest was high by Paraguayan standards. The EU and the OAS sent official missions, while Unasur fielded an unofficial mission that was not invited by the Paraguayan government; all three evaluated the electoral process posi-

tively.¹⁷ Colorado Party candidate Horacio Manuel Cartes won the election with 45.8 percent of the vote. Pedro Efraín Alegre of the Liberals finished second with 36.9 percent, despite the last-minute backing of the National Union of Ethical Citizens (known as UNACE), the party of controversial retired general Lino Oviedo, who died in a helicopter crash on 2 February 2013. Lugo's supporters split before the election: Lugo's favored candidate, Aníbal Enrique Carrillo of the Guasú Front, won only 3.4 percent, while his rival Mario Aníbal Ferreiro of Avanza País was slightly more successful with 5.9 percent. The poor showings by Carrillo and Ferreiro seem to corroborate Lugo's waning popular support toward the end of his presidency, which may help to explain why protests against his removal were so muted.

The Colorados won an absolute majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies (44 out of 80), but fell short of a majority in the Senate with only 19 of 45 seats. The PLRA, once again the main opposition force, won 27 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 13 in the Senate. The other 9 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, of which the parties supporting former president Lugo won only 3, were spread across seven parties. While Lugo supporters continue to play a minor role in the Chamber of Deputies, their position was actually strengthened in the Senate, where they now have 5 senators, including Lugo himself. Avanza País won 2 Senate seats, 4 seats went to two center-left parties, and the remaining 2 went to UNACE. With this favorable distribution of seats in Congress, Cartes can count on a legislative shield and runs little risk of impeachment, assuming that he can control his Colorados, who have a long tradition of splits and factions. In order to pass legislation, however, the new president will nevertheless need to negotiate with the Liberals or the left in the Senate.

The positive international evaluations of the 2013 electoral process and its unambiguous results should with time clear the way for a reintegration of the new Paraguayan government into both Mercosur and Unasur. The South American presidents have expressed their desire to welcome Paraguay into the decision-making bodies of both organizations. The presidents of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay even attended Cartes's swearing-in ceremony on August 15, although tensions still remain with Venezuela, whose leader was not invited.

Lugo's impeachment and the international reactions that it generated highlight the political motives that can underlie the use of legal instruments. Paraguay's Congress used the impeachment as a vote of censure for Lugo's failings in government. Lugo's fall can be explained by a purely political, albeit parliamentary, logic: A weak president lost the confidence of most of his country's national legislators. In presidential regimes, such a loss of confidence should not result in an interrupted presidency, but it can lead to deadlock between the legislative and executive powers. Lugo's impeachment, however, like several other cases of interrupted presidencies, demonstrates that without legislative

support presidents can find themselves hard-pressed to survive, much less govern. We believe that this pattern of governmental instability increases the importance of presidential leadership in the construction and maintenance of a governing coalition, preferably based on a negotiated political agenda. Today, a governing coalition is imperative not only to implement the president's agenda but also, perhaps, to keep the president in office.

In the international arena as well, political considerations guided hemispheric reactions to Lugo's fall. Politics rather than a principled defense of democracy explains why the strongest criticism of Paraguay came from the left-leaning governments in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Mercosur capitalized on Paraguay's suspension to bring in Venezuela, and Unasur used the case to further displace the OAS as the leading regional organization in South America. Yet an OAS-Unasur rivalry should raise concern, as it may weaken the international response to true democratic crises in the region.

Finally, both the reactions from South America and the statement by OAS secretary-general Insulza signal growing worry about the harm generated by sudden presidential ousters and an intent to stop government crises from turning into presidential breakdowns. Whether or not this will have a dampening effect on such crises remains to be seen. If anything, the Lugo impeachment and other presidential removals show that crises resulting in interrupted presidencies are fast-moving targets and hard to contain from the outside.

NOTES

1. Arturo Valenzuela, "Latin American Presidencies Interrupted," *Journal of Democracy* 15 (October 2004): 5–19.

2. For further analysis, see Kathryn Hochstetler, "Rethinking Presidentialism: Challenges and Presidential Falls in South America," *Comparative Politics* 38 (July 2006): 401–18; Leiv Marsteintredet and Einar Berntzen, "Reducing the Perils of Presidentialism in Latin America Through Presidential Interruptions," *Comparative Politics* 41 (October 2008): 83–101; Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment and the New Political Instability in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and 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). We use the terms interrupted presidency and presidential breakdown interchangeably in this article.

3. The PLRA held 15 of the APC coalition's 17 seats in the Senate and 29 of the APC's 31 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. (The Beloved Homeland Party, which also supported the government, won 4 seats.) For more on this election, see Diego Abente-Brun, "Paraguay: The Unraveling of One-Party Rule," *Journal of Democracy* 20 (January 2009): 143–56.

4. For an analysis of the successes and failures of the Lugo government, see Bertelsmann Stiftung "Paraguay Country Report," *Bertelsmann Stiftung Transparency Index 2012* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012).

5. See CID-Gallup polling data at www.gallup.com/poll/world.aspx and the Latino-barómetro Informe Flash Paraguay 1995–2012 at www.latinobarometro.org/documentos/LATBD_Informe_flash_Paraguay_1995-2012.pdf.

6. When Candia Amarilla was nominated as attorney-general, there were unconfirmed allegations that he had solicited a bribe as a judge and had worked as a private defense attorney on behalf of a well-known drug trafficker and other high-level criminals.

7. The Chamber of Deputies cited five counts to support its accusation of Lugo's poor performance of his duties: 1) organizing and financing a political meeting at the Engineer Command of the Armed Forces; 2) instigating and supporting illegal land occupations in the Nacunday area; 3) responsibility for the increasing insecurity in the country due to failure to combat the EPP; 4) signing the Ushuaia II protocol violating the democratic process; and 5) the killings in Curuguaty. See Libelo Acusatorio, Resolución H. Cámara de Diputados, No. 1431/2012, available at www.ultimahora.com/adjuntos/imagenes/000/432/0000432478.pdf.

8. See Heber Arbuét-Vignali, "Crisis en Paraguay: O en los conceptos políticos y jurídicos de su región?" *Suplemento ABC*, 26 August 2012, at www.abc.com.py/archivos/2012/08/25/crisis-en-paraguay-mercosur-125715.pdf. The Paraguayan government reacted particularly strongly to the criticism from Venezuela, expelling the country's ambassador in Asunción and accusing the Venezuelan foreign minister of interfering in the domestic affairs of Paraguay because he reportedly had called upon the Paraguayan military leadership to support President Lugo in the struggle with Congress.

9. See "Mission of the OAS Secretary General and Delegation to the Republic of Paraguay Conducted from July 1 to 3, 2012," *OAS*, CP/doc.4786/12 rev 1, 10 July 2012, available at www.oas.org/consejo/Documents%20DOC2012.asp.

10. Both President Cubas in Paraguay and President Collor de Melo in Brazil resigned just before the final vote in the Senate would have unseated them.

11. In the case of incapacity, constitutions often require that the president be examined by a team of physicians as well. For details on these procedures in Latin America, see Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment and the New Political Instability in Latin America*, 140–41.

12. See Detlef Nolte, "Paraguay: The President in His General's Labyrinth," in Mariana Llanos and Leiv Marsteintredet, eds., *Presidential Breakdowns in Latin America*.

13. In some cases, congresses have confirmed the presidential resignation *ex post facto*, without the legitimizing effect. Bolivian president Carlos Mesa (2003–2005) resigned after having lost what he declared to be a vote of confidence. Losing that vote triggered his resignation, though he was not constitutionally bound to resign.

14. Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment and the New Political Instability in Latin America*, 211.

15. See Craig Arceneaux and David Pion-Berlin, "Issues, Threats, and Institutions: Explaining OAS Responses to Democratic Dilemmas in Latin America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 49 (Summer 2007): 1–31.

16. See the 10 July 2012 speech of the OAS secretary-general José Insulza on the Paraguay situation at www.oas.org/en/about/speech_secretary_general.asp?sCodigo=12-0058.

17. Around 1,500 national and more than 500 international observers closely monitored the electoral process. See "Preliminary Statement," European Union Election Observation Mission Paraguay, 23 April 2013, www.euom.eu/files/pressreleases/english/PreliminaryStatementEUEOMParaguay2013.pdf.