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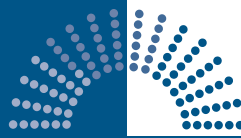
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Oversight or Representation? Public Opinion and Impeachment Resolutions in Argentina and Brazil

Why do legislators introduce impeachment resolutions against the president, even though most of these resolutions never succeed? We explore two possible answers to this puzzle, which are linked to the legislative functions of oversight and representation. First, legislators initiate impeachment procedures to expose (real or alleged) presidential misdeeds, an action that may weaken the president's approval rates, even if an impeachment process remains unlikely. Second, legislators introduce impeachment resolutions to express their constituents' outrage in the context of corruption scandals or poor economic performance—that is, in response to an exogenous decline in presidential approval. To test these hypotheses, we analyze 274 impeachment resolutions introduced against the presidents of Argentina and Brazil since the transition to democracy. We estimate models predicting presidential approval and impeachment resolutions using time-series and simultaneous equations estimators. Our results strongly support the representation hypothesis.

Why do legislators introduce impeachment resolutions against the president, even though most of these resolutions never succeed? Consider the cases of Argentina and Brazil since redemocratization in the 1980s. In Argentina, 87 impeachment resolutions were introduced in Congress between 1983 and 2018, but no impeachment ever took place. Presidents Raúl Alfonsín (1989), Fernando de la Rúa (2001), Adolfo Rodríguez Saá (2001), and Eduardo Duhalde (2003) resigned in the face of dire economic conditions and social turmoil, but Congress never acted to oust them. In Brazil, 193 impeachment resolutions were introduced in Congress between 1990

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and 2018, but only two of them were successful: Fernando Collor de Melo was impeached in 1992, and Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

The pattern described in the previous paragraph is consistent with the experience of the United States, where only three impeachment resolutions—against Presidents Johnson, Clinton, and Trump— have ever moved to the floor of the Senate. Such pattern is also consistent with a broader pattern of legislative behavior observed in parliamentary systems: only about 5% of no-confidence motions introduced in advanced parliamentary democracies actually result in the fall of the cabinet (Williams 2011).

There is considerable comparative research on the conditions explaining the success of impeachment processes, but we know much less about legislators' decisions to file impeachment resolutions, which normally die at the committee stage. We explore two possible answers to this puzzle, related to the congressional roles of oversight and representation. On the one hand, legislators may use impeachment resolutions to expose the executive's (real or alleged) misdeeds with the goal of rendering the president accountable. From this perspective, impeachment resolutions leverage congressional oversight powers to weaken public support for the president even if an impeachment process remains unlikely. On the other hand, legislators may initiate impeachment charges for position-taking purposes, once the president is in trouble. Calls for impeachment can express constituents' outrage in the context of major corruption scandals or poor economic performance, particularly when a legislative cartel protects the executive or if presidential misdeeds are difficult to prove.

This article explores the political use of impeachment resolutions in Argentina and Brazil, two countries with strong presidential systems, bicameral legislatures, and impeachment procedures modeled after the US Constitution. In contrast to the United States, however, both countries require a supermajority of two-thirds in the lower house to initiate an impeachment process and allow private citizens to introduce impeachment proposals in Congress (an institutional feature that we leverage for empirical purposes below).¹

Despite their constitutional similarities, Argentina and Brazil have major institutional differences that make our comparative findings plausible for other contexts and potentially generalizable. Argentina's executive branch has been led by a single party (the Justicialist or Peronist Party, PJ) for 70% of the period covered

in this study, and the president's party has, on average, controlled 45% of the seats in the lower house of Congress. Brazil has one of the most fragmented congresses in the world, and the president's party has on average controlled only 14% of seats in the lower house. Not surprisingly, Brazilian legislators have played a more proactive role in deciding the fate of presidents. However, despite such differences, similar conditions have driven a surge in impeachment proposals in both cases. In other words, even if the *level* and frequency of impeachment resolutions vary across the two countries, the factors driving *change* in legislative activity are similar.

We analyze 274 impeachment resolutions submitted against the presidents of Argentina and Brazil, from the transition to democracy through 2017. We are particularly concerned with those initiated by legislators, while citizen initiatives are taken as a control in our analysis. Our results show that impeachment resolutions *follow* but do not *produce* a decline in public support for the president. This finding remains consistent under different estimators and when we account for potential endogeneity in presidential approval.

The results thus offer strong evidence in support of the claim that legislators use impeachment resolutions as a tool of representation. In contrast, the ability of legislators to leverage their oversight powers to influence public opinion is very limited. Legislators' incentives thus explain the initiation of resolutions despite low chances of success. Because legislators prefer to take a stand when the president is less popular, and because impeachment resolutions are unlikely to move to the floor in any case, the number of failed resolutions is, paradoxically, likely to increase when the president is weaker. The article thus makes a contribution to the nascent empirical literature on presidential impeachment. Its conclusions shed additional light on broader patterns of legislative behavior, including the initiation of no-confidence motions in parliamentary systems.

Oversight and Representation

Latin American presidents are very strong actors in the political system. They enjoy direct legitimacy, and they are endowed with ample constitutional powers to act as heads of government (such as responsibility for cabinet appointments and dismissals) and as colegislators (such as veto and agenda-setting

powers) (Cox and Morgenstern 2001; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Negretto 2013; Shugart and Carey 1992). However, Latin American constitutions also empower congresses. Legislators have powers to amend legislation proposed by the executive and to monitor its activities at the policy implementation stage. Congressional authority to oversee the executive branch has been a feature of Latin American constitutions since the 19th century, a feature that has become stronger with subsequent constitutional reforms (Negretto 2009, 47). Therefore, the contemporary pattern of Latin American constitutionalism combines a strong legislature with a president vested with strong lawmaking powers (Cheibub et al. 2012, 82).

Perhaps the most powerful congressional prerogative concerns the removal of the president—as well as other officials—through impeachment. Following the US model, most Latin American constitutions enable the legislative branch to accuse, try, and eventually remove the president from office, normally with the agreement of supermajorities.² Grounds for impeachment include treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors (as in the US Constitution, Article 2); misconduct or crimes committed in the fulfillment of presidential duties or ordinary crimes (Argentina, Article 53); and acts that breach the constitution, the internal security of the country, or probity in administration (Brazil, Article 85). Constitutional grounds for impeachment are, as these constitutions illustrate, often loosely defined and may become a matter of controversy (Sunstein 2017). The decision to impeach ultimately lies in the hands of Congress, and it can be “regulated more by the comparative strength of parties than by the real demonstrations of innocence or guilt” (Hamilton, *Federalist No. 65*).³ Even though checks and balances have been designed to serve primarily as a deterrent, institutional crises have taken place recurrently in Latin America, often reflecting partisan conflicts (Helmke 2017).

The comparative literature on presidential impeachment has mostly focused on explaining the final outcome—that is, whether the president is removed from office—rather than on the early stages of the process. Some 19 presidents have been dismissed from office prematurely in Latin America over the past four decades, and legislators were decisive in at least nine of these episodes.⁴ Thus, it is not surprising that the literature has emphasized the central role of legislative parties. Low partisan support for the president in Congress is one of the most consistent

predictors of presidential removals (Baumgartner and Kada 2003; Helmke 2017; Hochstetler 2006; Kim and Bahry 2008; Llanos and Marsteintredet 2010; Marsteintredet, Llanos, and Nolte, 2013; Martínez 2017; Negretto 2006; Pérez-Liñán 2007, 2014; Pérez-Liñán and Polga-Hecimovich 2017). Limited partisan support in the legislature may result from features of the party system, such as high fragmentation (Alvarez and Marsteintredet 2010; Kim and Bahry 2008) or from the breakdown of government coalitions (Mejía Acosta and Polga-Hecimovich 2011). It may also reflect deficits in presidential leadership (Llanos and Margheritis 2006; Pérez Liñán 2007).

Analyses of presidential crises have also emphasized the role of contextual factors, such as poor economic performance (Hochstetler 2006; Hochstetler and Edwards 2009; Llanos and Marsteintredet 2010) or the eruption of media scandals (Hochstetler 2006; Pérez-Liñán 2007). Such conditions generate popular discontent and demonstrations against the president (Hochstetler and Edwards 2009; Kim and Bahry 2008; Martínez 2017). The coupling of street demonstrations and congressional opposition makes presidential removal a very likely outcome (Hochstetler 2006; Kim 2014; Marsteintredet 2014; Pérez Liñán 2007).

These studies show that presidential interruptions are a complex phenomenon, and thus they remain extraordinary events. Impeachments demand the construction of broad majorities at several stages in the legislative process. Legislators may converge in a coalition against the president for multiple reasons, or they may shield the president from impeachment due to partisan motives, despite evidence of wrongdoing (Pérez Liñán 2007).

However, the comparative literature on impeachment has remained silent about the first stage of the process: the introduction of impeachment resolutions in Congress. Why would members of Congress initiate calls for impeachment when the probability of success is very low? Legislators in the ruling coalition have hardly any incentives to challenge the president. The promotion of an impeachment can be a costly endeavor for their political careers. Attacking the president may preclude access to government-controlled pork or patronage or hurt their chances of renomination. No Argentine legislator, and only three Brazilian legislators in our sample, ever initiated resolutions against presidents supported by their parties.⁵ Opposition legislators, in contrast, have clear incentives to attack the president (Samuels and Shugart 2010), but their

behavior still requires a systematic explanation. Impeachment resolutions are seldom the best tool available for position-taking purposes, because accusations—real or fictional—against the president need to be substantiated. Lack of plausible evidence may undermine the credibility of the charges and backfire with voters. Legislators need information and specialized staff to investigate misdeeds or present them in a convincing way. These technical skills may be demanding, particularly in weakly professionalized legislatures.⁶ Due to these difficulties, few opposition legislators are willing to initiate impeachment resolutions.

Studies of parliamentary politics offer some insights on this issue. Williams (2011) documents that approximately 95% of all no-confidence motions initiated in advanced parliamentary democracies between 1960 and 2008 have failed. He infers from this fact that the purpose of most no-confidence motions is not to bring the cabinet down, but rather to improve the proponent's position in the next election. The results of his study indeed show that incumbents suffer an electoral penalty when they are faced with no-confidence motions, even if the motions fail. Williams concludes that "whether by illustrating to the electorate that they best represent their preferences or by demonstrating the government's incompetence, opposition parties can propose no-confidence motions to gain a long-term electoral benefit" (2011, 1479).

This conclusion underscores two causal mechanisms that potentially link voter preferences and legislative attacks on the executive. Williams emphasizes that opposition parties provide a credible signal about the quality of the government. Proponents of no-confidence motions obtain an electoral advantage if voters conclude, as a result of the signal represented by the motion, that the prime minister is incompetent. However, it is also possible that opposition parties use no-confidence motions to reveal information about themselves rather than to reveal information about the government. If voters already suspect government incompetence, proponents can use motions to "illustrate to the electorate that they best represent their preferences." (2011, 1479) In this case, challengers will see an improvement in electoral performance because voters feel represented by their actions against the incumbent.

These two mechanisms are linked to fundamental functions performed by legislatures: oversight and representation. In presidential regimes, legislators may use their oversight powers to reveal information about the executive, undermining the credibility of the president through investigations and impeachment motions.

Alternatively, legislators may realize that voters believe the president to be dishonest and employ impeachment resolutions as a position-taking instrument. Both mechanisms may coexist and even reinforce each other, but they have distinct empirical implications. In the first case, impeachment resolutions influence public opinion. In the second case, public opinion influences legislative behavior.

Oversight

Even if impeachment resolutions are unlikely to dislodge the president, members of Congress may initiate them to leverage their oversight powers. The question at stake is not whether legislators can effectively use impeachment to exercise executive oversight, but whether they can deploy their oversight powers to undermine the president through impeachment calls. Calls for impeachment spur public debate, encourage media and congressional investigations, and often force the administration to offer a public explanation. From this perspective, impeachment resolutions help correct informational asymmetries and challenge the administration in the court of public opinion. They act as “institutionalized leaks” of real or alleged misdeeds, with potential to undermine the president’s public standing.

The introduction of an isolated impeachment resolution is unlikely to have much impact, but a proliferation of accusations against the executive can harm presidential approval. Using oversight powers to undermine public support involves less ambitious goals than ousting the president; yet even such limited goals may prove unattainable for individual Congress members. Individual legislators are typically lesser political players when compared to the president. They may compensate this structural imbalance by building a strong case with substantiated evidence on presidential wrongdoing, but isolated requests are unlikely to make a dent on presidential approval.

The introduction of multiple resolutions by several congress members, in contrast, will call public attention to allegations in ways that an individual request may not. Under the right circumstances, voters will treat impeachment resolutions as an informative signal about the president’s misdeeds. When legislators have access to undisclosed information and are in a position to reveal

extraordinary evidence, a large number of resolutions will convey a credible message to the public, such that:

H1 (credible oversight): A higher frequency of impeachment resolutions will undermine public support for the president.

Evidence in favor of Hypothesis 1 would suggest that the use of oversight tools in presidential regimes is akin to the use of no-confidence motions described by Williams (2011) in parliamentary systems. Two factors, however, may limit this strategy. First, legislatures are in most contexts less popular than the presidency. This legitimacy gap will potentially undermine the credibility of impeachment resolutions. Second, impeachment resolutions are typically introduced by major opposition parties. Aware that a government-opposition logic drives the use of oversight mechanisms (Helmke 2017; Llanos and Mustapic 2006; O'Donnell 1998), voters may discount the proliferation of resolutions as politically motivated.

Representation

Legislators may introduce unsuccessful impeachment resolutions for yet another reason. Discussing the introduction of no-confidence motions in parliamentary systems, Stan noted that “when initiating motions, parties seek to fulfill the short-term goal of bringing down the cabinet and the long-term goal of gaining public support by showing that they best represent voters’ policy preferences and are thus worthy of electoral support” (2015, 293).

If the president is already unpopular, legislators may submit impeachment resolutions merely for position-taking purposes. Attacks on the president can attract considerable media attention for opposition members of Congress. For example, almost three years before Trump’s impeachment, *The Washington Post* reported on May 17, 2017, that: “No Democrat was in more demand Wednesday than Rep. Al Green (Tex.) (...) who held a hometown news conference two days before calling for the impeachment of President Trump” (Weigel and DeBonis 2017).

Given the centrality of the presidency in the political system, a weakened president opens a window of opportunity for legislators,

who may respond to media exposés—or to other sources of public malaise—by taking a public stand against the executive. A persistent decline in presidential approval will increase pressures to intensify congressional action against the executive. By introducing an impeachment resolution under these circumstances, legislators take a position against the president and express their constituents' outrage. In this case, legislators do not *lead* but rather *follow* public opinion. The empirical implication of this strategy would be that:

H2 (representation): The lower presidential approval is, the higher the frequency of impeachment resolutions introduced in Congress.

Our second hypothesis also requires consideration of a few caveats. First, the introduction of impeachment resolutions may reach a quick point of saturation, becoming a suboptimal strategy. The introduction of multiple resolutions reduces the probability of success for any single request, diminishing the credit-claiming value of each individual effort. This pattern of diminishing returns may explain why the number of impeachment resolutions introduced in congress has remained limited even when presidents are highly unpopular. Second, disgruntled voters may express their dislike for the president through protests and citizen initiatives. Such actions may reinforce legislators' incentives to take strong positions against the president, but they may also substitute for legislative resolutions. Extant literature suggests that protests in the streets will offer further incentives for legislative action, particularly if such protests target the president directly (Hochstetler and Edwards 2009). The effect of citizen initiatives, in contrast, is more ambiguous. In systems that allow citizens to initiate impeachment requests, such as Argentina and Brazil, legislators may choose to support ongoing initiatives rather than introducing resolutions of their own.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 offer two potential explanations for the introduction of unsuccessful impeachment resolutions: legislators may use resolutions as a way of leveraging their oversight authority to undercut the president or to voice an already existing discontent with presidential performance. These two explanations are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to imagine a situation in which some legislators make calls for impeachment to expose major misdeeds, ultimately eroding popular support for the executive. Then, in response to the decline in presidential approval, new

legislators jump onto the bandwagon to show their constituents that they share the outrage. Thus, the evidence may ultimately indicate that both hypotheses are true, that only one of them is true, or that both are false.

The Politics of Impeachment in Argentina and Brazil

We test these hypotheses using evidence from Argentina and Brazil. Impeachment resolutions have been introduced regularly in both countries, although with different frequencies and results. As noted in the introduction, two presidents have been impeached in Brazil since redemocratization in the 1980s (Fernando Collor in 1992 and Dilma Rousseff in 2016) and one was accused but ultimately avoided impeachment (Michel Temer in 2017), while no president has been impeached in Argentina.⁷ Prompted by the executive, Argentine legislators impeached Supreme Court justices in the period 2003–2005, but they never charged the president.⁸ Instead, Argentine presidents assailed by economic meltdowns and street protests simply resigned from office in 1989, 2001, and 2003 (Mustapic 2005).

Despite the differences in outcomes, the two presidential democracies grant citizens as well as legislators the right to introduce impeachment resolutions. Argentina's congressional rules impose no formal requirements on the introduction of impeachment resolutions other than a description of the charges against the president, the attachment of available documentary evidence, and personal information about the signatories (obviously relevant for private citizens).⁹ The Impeachment Committee of the Chamber of Deputies then decides whether to investigate the case. Brazil's congressional rules similarly indicate that any citizen can introduce an impeachment resolution by providing documentation or five witnesses in support of charges against the president.¹⁰ The Speaker of the House, as a gatekeeper, decides whether to form a special committee to investigate the charges.¹¹

Despite these similarities, the two countries have important differences that make this comparison relevant for a broad range of presidential regimes. Argentina has a limited number of parties in Congress, with the effective number of parties in the lower chamber oscillating between two and four since redemocratization in 1983. Peronist presidents, who have ruled for most of the period (Carlos Menem, 1989–99; Néstor Kirchner, 2003–2007; Cristina F. de Kirchner, 2007–15), often control majorities in both chambers.

Brazil, in contrast, has a very fragmented legislature, with the effective number of parties oscillating between five and 13 since redemocratization. Presidents command small congressional delegations and are forced to rely on party coalitions to form legislative majorities. Those coalitions require the sharing of cabinet positions and pork with coalition partners (Ames 2001; Inácio 2018; Pereira and Melo 2012). Although Brazilian presidents have important agenda-setting powers, they must stay on good terms with Congress to pass legislation—and to remain in office.

In addition, Argentine parties have stronger roots in society than most Brazilian parties (Levitsky 2003; Mainwaring 1999, 2018). Due to this fact, cooperation between opposition parties and social forces takes opposite forms in each country. In Argentina, opposition parties—particularly the Peronists—can encourage social movements to take the streets in order to undermine weak presidents (Auyero 2007). Argentine opposition parties therefore cooperate with social movements outside the formal arena of the legislature, because other, less institutionalized ways of destabilizing the president are available (Malamud 2006; Ollier 2008). In Brazil, in contrast, opposition parties have limited influence over civil society. Legislators depend on narrow constituencies and rely on local coalitions of voters. Brazilian parties therefore cooperate with social movements through congressional action. Credible impeachment accusations often originate in NGOs, professional associations, or teams of lawyers, and parties eventually join in support of an impeachment resolution.

In sum, because party organizations are stronger in Argentina, Congress is—paradoxically—a stronger institution in Brazil.¹² Tighter party control through large majorities and lower legislative capacity weaken Argentine legislators' position vis-à-vis the executive. Brazilian legislators initiate more impeachment resolutions and coordinate strategies with private citizens within the congressional arena, while Argentine parties initiate fewer resolutions and cooperate with social movements against the president in the streets. Given such differences, any similarities in the functional relationship between presidential approval and the use of impeachment resolutions will potentially yield valuable theoretical insights.

Data

Our units of analysis are quarterly observations for presidential administrations in Argentina, 1983–2017 ($N = 137$), and Brazil,

1990–2017 ($N = 111$). We focus on quarters instead of months to avoid an artificial expansion in the number of observations, given that presidential approval measures are not available on a monthly basis for the whole period under study and that other variables, such as economic growth, are reported quarterly. However, as we show below, a monthly dataset with interpolated values generates equivalent results. Quarters in which the administration changed reflect information for the outgoing president.

In tests of the first hypothesis, the dependent variable is presidential approval, while the main predictor is the frequency of impeachment resolutions introduced by legislators during the previous quarter. In tests of the second hypothesis, we reverse the order of the variables, modeling the frequency of impeachment resolutions as a function of presidential approval in the previous quarter.

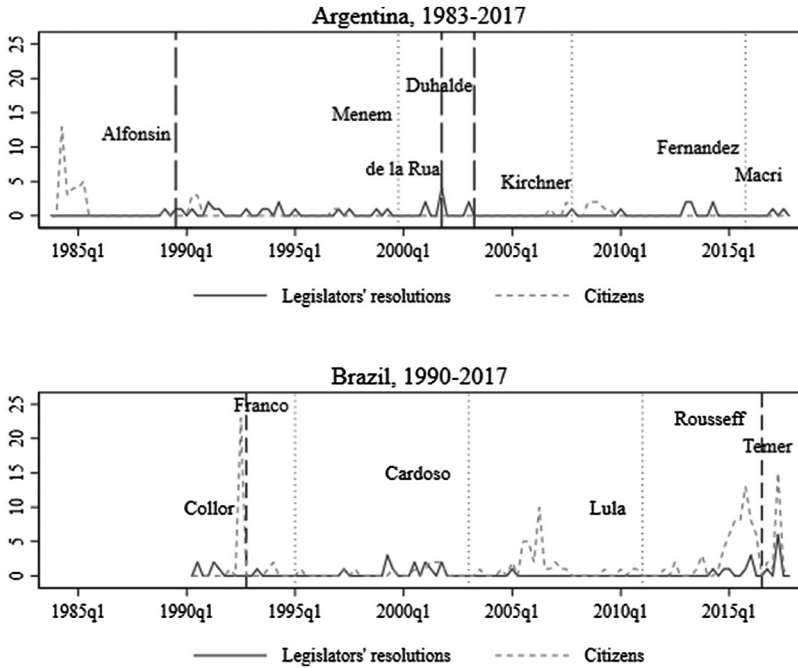
We employ two alternative estimators. First, because impeachment resolutions and presidential approval may reciprocally affect each other (if Hypotheses 1 and 2 are both correct), and because unobserved confounders may influence the endogenous relation among the two factors, we employ a structural equation model that tests Hypotheses 1 and 2 simultaneously, allowing for correlated residuals across the two equations. In addition, because unobserved latent conditions that affect approval or impeachment resolutions may persist over time due to lasting scandals, we conduct a robustness test using autoregressive count models. The results, as we show in the following sections, remain consistent irrespective of the estimation strategy adopted.

Impeachment Resolutions

Our main variable captures the number of impeachment resolutions introduced by legislators in any single quarter (or month, in robustness tests). To compile series, we relied on information provided by congressional sources. For Argentina, we conducted a search of the official archives of the Chamber of Deputies. For Brazil, we obtained the information from the General Secretariat of the Chamber of Deputies. Our models also control for the number of resolutions proposed by citizens, extracted from the same sources.

Figure 1 displays the number of impeachment resolutions initiated by legislators and private citizens every quarter. As anticipated, the frequency of legislator-initiated resolutions has been

FIGURE 1
Impeachment Resolutions by Legislators and Citizens in
Argentina and Brazil



Note: Vertical lines reflect outgoing administrations (long dashes are presidential interruptions).

lower on average in Argentina (0.26 per quarter) than in Brazil (0.30 per quarter). However, most impeachment resolutions in Brazil are initiated by citizens. Resolutions peaked in the third quarter of 1992 (with 23 initiatives towards the end of the Collor administration, all from citizens) and in the last quarter of 2015 (14 towards the end of the Rousseff administration, 13 of them from citizens). The long-dash reference lines, denoting interrupted presidencies (i.e., anticipated transfers of office), coincide with the surge of impeachment resolutions in Brazil, but not in Argentina. The timing and frequency of citizen resolutions suggests that the alignment of citizen initiatives with partisan interests is crucial for the outcome of impeachment processes in Brazil. At the end of Collor de Melo's administration (1990–92) and of Rousseff's second term (2014–16), citizens' requests skyrocketed and those of legislators followed suit.

We classified as legislator-sponsored resolutions those for which congressional sources explicitly identify legislators or political parties as initiators. For example, the successful resolution leading to President Rouseff's impeachment in 2016 is coded as a citizen initiative by congressional sources because no legislator sponsored the original proposal, even though the accusation later evolved into a "political" operation. Thirty legislator-sponsored resolutions submitted were introduced by opposition legislators, and only three by coalition members until 2017. We control for the citizen-sponsored initiatives (155 cases) in our time-series models.

Presidential Approval

We use data from IPSOS-Mora y Araujo (1983–2017) to measure presidential approval in Argentina and from CNI-IBOPE (1990–2017) to measure presidential approval in Brazil. Our series reflect the percentage of respondents in national polls who considered the president to be handling the job well or very well.¹³ Values were interpolated for missing months to create monthly series employed in robustness tests presented below.

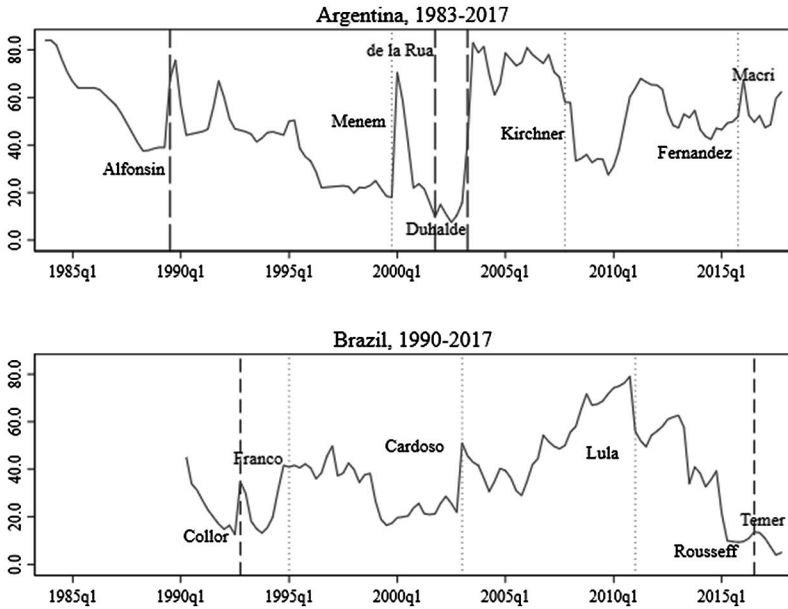
Figure 2 summarizes yearly levels of public support for the presidents in our sample. Presidents in Argentina have outperformed their counterparts in Brazil by 12 points on average (48% vs. 36%). However, both countries have displayed considerable variance in presidential approval—the standard deviation is close to 19 points in both countries.

Additional Variables

Our models also incorporate several variables that potentially affect the frequency of impeachment resolutions as well as presidential approval. Information for some potential confounders was not available beyond 2017; thus, our multivariate models cover quarterly (or monthly) observations through 2017.

We calculate quarterly *economic growth* rates from gross domestic product levels reported by the World Bank's Global Economic Monitor, measured in millions of 2010 local currency, and seasonally adjusted. For Argentina before 1987, we estimate growth rates from quarterly GDP levels reported by the National Institute for Statistics and the Census (INDEC). All values are lagged by one term.

FIGURE 2
 Presidential Approval in Argentina and Brazil (Quarterly
 Averages)



Note: Vertical lines reflect outgoing administrations (long dashes are presidential interruptions).

For Brazil, we calculated *inflation* rates based on the consumer price index reported by the World Bank's Global Economic Monitor. (We averaged seasonally and nonseasonally adjusted series). Unfortunately, reliable inflation series are not available for Argentina nationwide because the National Institute for Statistics and the Census (INDEC) manipulated consumer price figures in 2007–15. To address this problem, we collected data for the Buenos Aires area from multiple sources: INDEC (1983–2006), Graciela Bevacqua (IPC GB, 1/2007–6/2012), and the City of Buenos Aires (from 7/2012). Monthly inflation rates were averaged per quarter and lagged one time unit.

Because lower approval rates and more impeachment resolutions may correlate with mass mobilization against the president, our models control for antigovernment *demonstrations*, defined as the number of public demonstrations per month against the president, the central government, or the president's major policies.

This information was coded by Martínez (2018) from the *Latin American Weekly Report*.

To account for the fact that a strong “legislative shield” may dissuade the initiation of impeachment resolutions, the models include size of the president’s *coalition* (the percentage of seats controlled by the president’s party and its allies in the lower house of Congress). Presidential majorities are quite stable in Argentina, with the governing party or alliance functioning as a cartel, and floor votes separating government and opposition (Jones et al. 2009). In contrast, presidential majorities may vary considerably between elections in coalitional Brazil. We coded the monthly evolution of Brazilian coalitions based on Figueiredo (2007), augmented for recent years. In Argentina, we tracked variation in the size of the president’s party or official alliance (when there was one) through roll-call votes, but we did not consider occasional allies in particular votes.¹⁴

Comparative studies of presidential approval have identified a recurrent cycle: high approval rates during the early “honeymoon” period, followed by a sustained decline, and a likely end-of-term rebound in the final months (Carlin et al. 2018). Arguably, this cycle may also influence legislators’ propensity to challenge the president, because they will have fewer reasons to demand an impeachment in the early days of an administration. For simplicity, we capture the *presidential approval cycle* using dummies for the first (honeymoon) and last (rebound) quarters of an administration.¹⁵ We tested for approval trends in additional ways, including dummies for the second and third quarters, and a quadratic time function for the president’s number of months in office. The main results presented below did not change.

Estimation and Results

Testing the hypothesis about oversight (Hypothesis 1) and representation (Hypothesis 2) presents several challenges because changes in presidential approval may be both the cause and the result of legislative calls for impeachment. To address the possibility of reverse causation, we employ a cross-lagged model in which the number of impeachment resolutions in the previous time period affects current presidential approval, and in which presidential approval in the previous period affects the current number of resolutions. However, it is possible that some unobserved confounders will influence both presidential approval rates and legislators’

inclination to call for impeachment. To account for potential endogeneity, the two equations are estimated simultaneously, and their residuals are assumed to be correlated.

Figure 3 depicts the structure of the simultaneous equations model. Presidential approval at time t is a function of legislators' impeachment resolutions at time $t - 1$ (plus economic growth, inflation, social unrest, citizen's resolutions, legislative backing, and the approval cycle). In turn, the number of legislator-initiated impeachment resolutions at time t is a function of presidential approval at $t - 1$ (plus controls). Both equations are dynamic, in the sense that the dependent variable is a function of its status in the previous time period. The residuals of both equations (ϵ_1 , ϵ_2) are correlated, reflecting any unobserved link between the two variables.

Oversight

Although the two equations are estimated simultaneously, we present the estimates separately to facilitate a substantive interpretation of the findings. Table 1 presents four tests of the first hypothesis, claiming that impeachment resolutions undermine presidential approval. The dependent variable is the level of presidential approval, and the main predictor is the number of impeachment resolutions introduced by legislators.

Against Hypothesis 1, the analysis does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that calls for impeachment undermine popular support for the president. The coefficient for legislators'

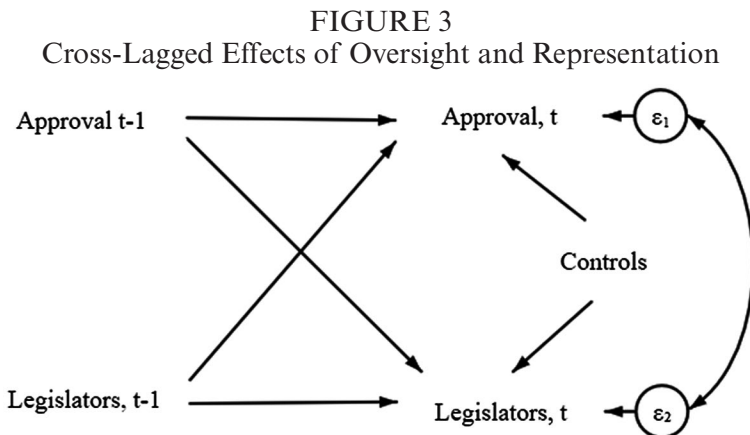


TABLE 1
Effect of Impeachment Resolutions on Presidential Approval

	(1.1)	(1.2)	(1.3)	(1.4)
Equation 1: Approval	ARG	BRA	ARG	BRA
Approval $t - 1$	0.929* (0.029)	0.980* (0.031)	0.930* (0.028)	0.947* (0.031)
Legislators $t - 1$	2.250* (1.069)	-0.692 (0.661)	1.881 (1.010)	-1.035 (0.679)
Citizen Resolutions $t - 1$			-0.334 (0.405)	0.144 (0.221)
Growth, $t - 1$			0.151 (0.142)	0.633* (0.265)
Inflation, $t - 1$			0.117* (0.054)	-0.017 (0.042)
Demonstrations, $t - 1$			-0.796 (0.621)	-0.931* (0.408)
Coalition %			-0.310* (0.098)	0.099* (0.046)
First Quarter			-3.461 (1.903)	-1.236 (1.670)
Last Quarter			-1.742 (2.768)	2.420 (2.237)
Constant	1.891 (1.590)	0.203 (1.345)	16.083* (4.690)	-4.223 (3.074)
Model Parameters				
Var (e.approval)	41.079* (4.963)	28.518* (3.828)	35.755* (4.320)	23.132* (3.105)
Var (e.legislators)	0.357* (0.043)	0.616* (0.083)	0.342* (0.041)	0.591* (0.079)
Cov (e.approval,e.legislators)	0.196 (0.328)	-0.962* (0.408)	0.027 (0.299)	-0.890* (0.361)
Observations (quarterly)	137	111	137	111

Note: Entries are coefficients for SEM models with correlated error structure (standard errors). See Table 2 for the second equation.

* $p < 0.05$.

impeachment resolutions is negative in the Brazilian case, but it fails to achieve conventional levels of significance. In Argentina, the coefficient is positive, hinting at the possibility that legislators may in fact use their oversight powers to undercut *strong* presidents, but this effect is statistically insignificant once we introduce a vector of controls.

As a signaling tool leveraging the oversight role of Congress, impeachment resolutions appear to be a feeble instrument. This is

so even when presidents are bold in pursuing policy reforms and engaged in scandals. For example, the contemporary Carlos Menem (1989–99) in Argentina and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994–2003) in Brazil were targeted by a similar number of impeachment resolutions from legislators (0.41 and 0.37, respectively, per quarter on average). Menem was tainted by multiple corruption scandals and controversial moves such as the packing of the Supreme Court. His far-reaching structural economic reforms triggered congressional opposition. However, impeachment resolutions against him were consistently shelved or rejected by the Impeachment Committee of the lower house and, above all, did not affect his popularity. Menem even managed to get reelected in 1995. In Brazil, Cardoso was not tainted by similar corruption scandals, but several impeachment resolutions objected to his economic policies, pointed to the administration's faults, and challenged his quest for a constitutional reform allowing his reelection. The bulk of impeachment resolutions against Cardoso was introduced in the middle of his second term (with five resolutions in 2001), but the president finished this term with growing approval rates, as shown in Figure 2.

Table 1 offers very few additional insights on the drivers of presidential approval. Approval shows high levels of stability over time with an autoregressive coefficient above .90 in all cases. Citizen-initiated impeachment resolutions are also ineffective to undermine public support for the administration. Economic growth seems to foster, while public protests seem to undermine, the president's public standing, but those effects are statistically significant only in the Brazilian sample. Inflation presents a counterintuitive positive coefficient in the Argentine context, possibly because some popular presidents, like Carlos Menem, inherited high levels of inflation from their predecessors. The bottom panel of the table also suggests that in Brazil—but not in Argentina—some unobserved factors that promote presidential approval also reduce the risk of impeachment resolutions.

Representation. Table 2 presents our tests of the second hypothesis, which claims that impeachment resolutions are a response to drops in presidential popularity. The main predictor is the rate of presidential approval in the previous quarter. In line with Hypothesis 2, the evidence shows that legislators in Argentina and Brazil are responsive to public opinion. A drop in presidential approval prompts a surge in impeachment proposals signed by Congress members.

TABLE 2
Effect of Approval on the Number of Legislative Impeachment Resolutions

	(2.1)	(2.2)	(2.3)	(2.4)
Equation 2: Resolutions	ARG	BRA	ARG	BRA
Approval $t - 1$	-0.009*	-0.015*	-0.008*	-0.015*
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Legislators $t - 1$	-0.059	-0.101	-0.061	-0.122
	(0.100)	(0.097)	(0.099)	(0.108)
Citizen Resolutions $t - 1$			-0.030	0.008
			(0.040)	(0.035)
Growth, $t - 1$			0.007	-0.044
			(0.014)	(0.042)
Inflation, $t - 1$			0.008	-0.012
			(0.005)	(0.007)
Demonstrations, $t - 1$			0.079	-0.016
			(0.061)	(0.065)
Coalition %			-0.011	-0.006
			(0.010)	(0.007)
First Quarter			-0.111	-0.043
			(0.186)	(0.267)
Last Quarter			-0.071	-0.067
			(0.271)	(0.358)
Constant	0.700*	0.894*	1.124*	1.355*
	(0.148)	(0.198)	(0.459)	(0.491)
Model Parameters				
Var (e.approval)	41.079*	28.518*	35.755*	23.132*
	(4.963)	(3.828)	(4.320)	(3.105)
Var (e.legislators)	0.357*	0.616*	0.342*	0.591*
	(0.043)	(0.083)	(0.041)	(0.079)
Cov (e.approval, e.legislators)	0.196	-0.962*	0.027	-0.890*
	(0.328)	(0.408)	(0.299)	(0.361)
Observations	137	111	137	111

Note: Entries are coefficients for SEM models with correlated error structure (standard errors). See Table 1 for the first equation.

* $p < 0.05$.

No other predictor has a comparable influence on legislative calls for impeachment. Mass demonstrations against the government and citizen calls for impeachment have insignificant effects in all models. The size of the president's coalition in the lower house does not appear to dissuade attacks against the executive. Although the coefficient is negative for both countries, the effects fail to reach conventional levels of significance. This finding reinforces

the argument that impeachment resolutions are introduced for position-taking purposes, following public opinion, even if their success is unlikely. For example, the Workers' Party administrations (Lula da Silva from 2003 to 2011 and Dilma Rousseff from 2011 to 2016) had the largest and most ideologically heterogeneous coalitions of Brazil in the recent era, with approximately eight parties. Opposition legislators did not target the highly popular President Lula (they introduced just one resolution against him), but they did target his unpopular successor, President Rousseff (who faced seven legislator-initiated resolutions, two of them introduced by future president Jair Bolsonaro). Rousseff's coalition was particularly tense and conflictual; it eventually broke down, which hastened her impeachment in Congress.

Brazilian legislators exercised their representative function not only by introducing new impeachment resolutions, but also by supporting citizen-initiated ones.¹⁶ Rousseff was confronted with the largest number of resolutions introduced by private citizens (61) during the contemporary era (see Figure 1). The resolution ultimately admitted by Congress was initiated by three citizens, all jurists with political connections. They were a onetime founder of the Workers' Party (PT), a young independent lawyer named Janaina Paschoal, and a Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) lawyer. The first two had already introduced a resolution against Rousseff, but they revised it to incorporate the views of the third author and thus gain the endorsement of the PSDB, the main opposition party. Paschoal complained that these revisions distorted her original proposal (e.g., by removing references to the notorious *Petrobrás* scandal, which affected many members of Congress), but she was conscious of the need to compromise in order to move the process forward (Duailibi 2016). Like many others, this resolution would have been shelved, save for a conflict in the ruling coalition. The president of the Chamber of Deputies and key gatekeeper for impeachment resolutions, who belonged to the largest party in the coalition, expected Rousseff's delegation in Congress to stop ongoing corruption investigations against him. When Rousseff declined to offer protection, he allowed the impeachment resolution to proceed to the committee stage. This decision unleashed the process leading to Rousseff's removal from office in August 2016. Police investigators following the corruption trail arrested the president of the Chamber less than two months later.

Robustness Tests

Tables 1 and 2 indicate that low presidential approval drives legislators' incentives to call for presidential impeachment, while calls for impeachment are unable to undermine presidential approval. The simultaneous estimation helps dispel concerns about

TABLE 3
Simultaneous Equations: Monthly Data

	(3.1.1)	(3.1.2)	(3.2.1)	(3.2.2)
	ARG	ARG	BRA	BRA
	Approval	Resolutions	Approval	Resolutions
<i>Outcome</i>				
Approval $t - 1$	0.983*	-0.002*	0.988*	-0.006*
	(0.008)	(0.001)	(0.008)	(0.002)
Legislators $t - 1$	0.248	-0.022	-0.235	-0.014
	(0.499)	(0.059)	(0.301)	(0.058)
Citizen Resolutions $t - 1$	0.035	-0.004	0.085	-0.004
	(0.247)	(0.029)	(0.093)	(0.018)
Growth, $t - 1$	0.037	-0.008	0.280*	0.007
	(0.039)	(0.005)	(0.074)	(0.014)
Inflation, $t - 1$	-0.010	0.001	-0.004	-0.004
	(0.010)	(0.001)	(0.013)	(0.003)
Demonstrations, $t - 1$	-0.012	-0.036	-1.184*	-0.064
	(0.311)	(0.037)	(0.215)	(0.041)
Coalition %	-0.084*	-0.006	0.036*	-0.002
	(0.028)	(0.003)	(0.012)	(0.002)
First Quarter	-0.975	-0.078	-0.444	-0.083
	(0.610)	(0.073)	(0.523)	(0.100)
Last Quarter	-0.013	-0.088	0.514	-0.009
	(0.788)	(0.094)	(0.623)	(0.119)
Constant	4.165*	0.480*	-1.843*	0.433*
	(1.335)	(0.159)	(0.808)	(0.154)
<i>Model Parameters</i>				
Var (e.approval)	8.742*		5.430*	
	(0.611)		(0.421)	
Var (e.legislators)	0.124*		0.199*	
	(0.009)		(0.015)	
Cov (e.app, e.leg)	0.002		-0.130*	
	(0.051)		(0.057)	
Observations	409		333	

Note: Entries are coefficients for SEM models with correlated error structure (standard errors).

* $p < 0.05$.

reverse causality and endogeneity. However, two other issues deserve attention. First, there is no single theory to guide our expectations regarding how long legislators should take to respond to public opinion. Our previous tests relied on quarterly observations, but the response function could be much faster. To explore this possibility, we reestimate the full models for Argentina and Brazil using monthly observations.¹⁷ Table 3 displays the results for the two equations in each country.

The analysis of monthly data confirms our previous findings. In Argentina and Brazil, higher presidential approval rates discourage legislators from initiating impeachment requests. An

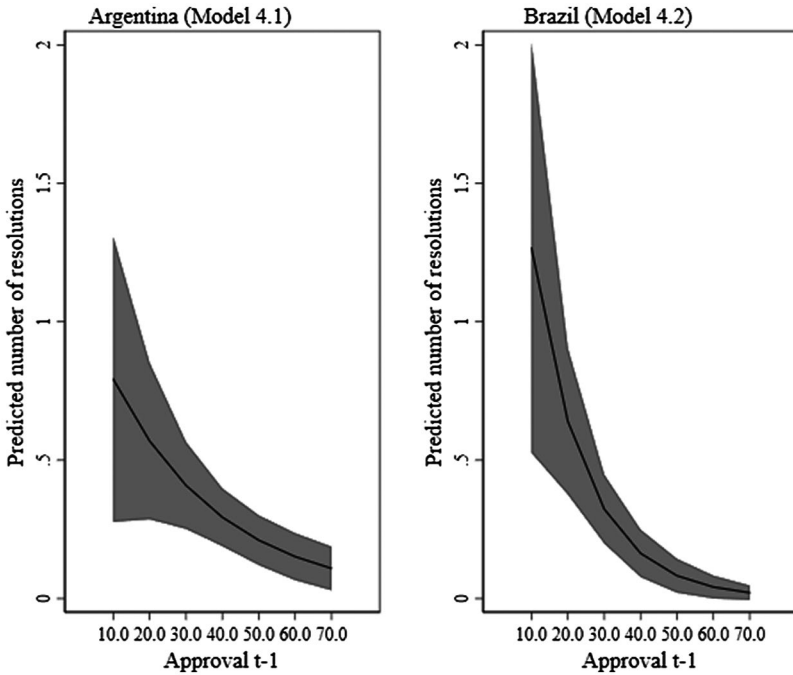
TABLE 4
Autoregressive Count Models of Impeachment Resolutions
(Quarterly)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	ARG	BRA	ARG	BRA
	Poisson	Poisson	N. Bin.	N. Bin.
Approval $t - 1$	-0.033* (0.010)	-0.068* (0.014)	-0.032* (0.011)	-0.081* (0.020)
Legislators $t - 1$	-0.400 (0.367)	-0.208 (0.224)	-0.106 (0.357)	-0.211 (0.297)
Citizen Resolutions $t - 1$	-0.426 (0.442)	-0.062 (0.067)	-0.427 (0.436)	-0.084 (0.096)
Growth, $t - 1$	-0.004 (0.057)	-0.167 (0.117)	0.016 (0.062)	-0.183 (0.151)
Inflation, $t - 1$	0.009 (0.013)	-0.089* (0.036)	0.016 (0.015)	-0.094* (0.043)
Demonstrations, $t - 1$	0.235 (0.175)	-0.156 (0.183)	0.249 (0.202)	-0.198 (0.245)
Coalition %	-0.044 (0.032)	-0.024 (0.019)	-0.041 (0.035)	-0.025 (0.024)
First Quarter	-1.360 (1.132)	-0.743 (0.856)	-1.067 (1.146)	-0.870 (1.159)
Last Quarter	-0.290 (0.963)	-0.413 (1.055)	-0.456 (1.194)	-0.261 (1.244)
Constant	2.103 (1.522)	2.870* (1.282)	1.768 (1.647)	3.371* (1.668)
Autocorrelation (Rho)	.079	-.030	.006	-.031
Dispersion (Alpha)			0.699	1.483
Observations	137	111	137	111

Note: Entries are coefficients for count models with $ar(1)$ error structure (standard errors).

* $p < 0.05$.

FIGURE 4
Expected Number of Impeachment Resolutions, by Presidential Approval



Note: Based on Table 4, other predictors held at their observed values. Band reflects 95% confidence interval.

increase in legislative calls for impeachment, in contrast, does not undermine the president's popularity. This pattern reinforces the conclusion that legislators introduce impeachment resolutions for representation purposes and that their oversight role is not sufficiently established to influence public opinion towards the government.

A second source of concern refers to the analysis of impeachment resolutions. Figure 1 shows that impeachment resolutions are rare and that the average number of them observed in any given period is therefore low. About 80% of the periods register no legislative calls for impeachment. The variable measuring the frequency of resolutions has a mean of 0.28 in the typical quarter.¹⁸ Because linear estimators are not designed to account for such low

frequencies, we retest representation effects using count (Poisson and Negative Binomial) models in Table 4.

Table 4 confirms representation effects in Argentina and Brazil, using count estimators. The coefficient for presidential approval is consistently negative and statistically significant. In the absence of a simultaneous approval equation, these models do not allow for an endogenous error term, and the frequency of impeachment resolutions observed at time t may depend on the behavior of unobserved variables at time $t - 1$. To minimize this problem, we estimated autoregressive count models in which the residual $\varepsilon_t = \rho\varepsilon_{t-1} + u_t$, such that parameter ρ (Rho) captures the legacy of unobserved variables during the previous quarter, and u is an independent and identically distributed residual.

Figure 4 plots the expected frequency of impeachment resolutions at different levels of presidential approval. Legislative calls for impeachment are likely when presidents are unpopular, but extremely rare when presidents command voter support. Although legislators are similarly sensitive to public opinion in Argentina and Brazil, the response pattern for Brazilian legislators is steeper than in Argentina, in line with coalitional presidential politics.

The Logic of Impeachment Resolutions

Legislators often call for the impeachment of the president, even knowing that most resolutions proposed will be promptly shelved. What explains this behavior? Our analysis of impeachment resolutions introduced in Argentina and Brazil tested two alternative explanations: whether legislators leverage their oversight powers to undermine the president or rather use impeachment resolutions as a position-taking tool to voice popular discontent with the president's performance.

We find no evidence that impeachment resolutions are sufficient to undermine public support for the president. This finding separates presidential systems from the experience of parliamentary regimes, where failed no-confidence motions have an impact on voter behavior (Williams 2011). Several factors may explain this null finding. First, it could result from features of the Argentine and Brazilian legislatures, where few requirements to initiate impeachment resolutions limit their informational capacity and undermine their credibility. It is unclear, however, that impeachment resolutions initiated by more powerful legislators acting under more restrictive rules, like those in the US Congress,

influence public opinion more forcefully. Second, it is also possible that voters in all presidential democracies heavily discount calls for impeachment as partisan maneuvers from impatient oppositions. Third, even if legislators introduce multiple impeachment resolutions, such actions may be unable to influence public debates unless they trigger subsequent congressional or media investigations. Further research should establish the generalizability of this null pattern among presidential systems.

In contrast, the evidence in both countries is consistent with the use of impeachment resolutions for representative purposes. Legislators initiate impeachment requests in response to declines in public support for the executive. As such, these resolutions function as position-taking instruments. This result is also consistent with other findings in the literature. It resonates with studies that emphasize the role of presidential impeachments in contemporary Latin America as a functional equivalent of a parliamentary vote of no confidence (Marsteintredet and Berntzen 2008; Mustapic 2005). Legislators proceed in response to the overall performance of the government rather than to address an alleged “crime.”

The consistent findings for Argentina, a system with few parties and strong presidents, and Brazil, a system with a large number of parties and weaker presidents, suggests that this legislative practice is not unique to any particular form of presidentialism. Moreover, the use of impeachment resolutions seems to illuminate a broader pattern of behavior. Stan and Vancea (2014) document that, between 1989 and 2012, Romanian legislators introduced 140 no-confidence motions in parliament but adopted only 13 of them and unseated the cabinet through censure only twice. Williams (2011) reports that only 5% of no-confidence motions in advanced parliamentary democracies resulted in the termination of a government from 1960 to 2008. Qvortrup (2011) reports that citizens initiated 45 recall petitions against governors in California between 1913 and 2009, but only one recall removed a governor from office. This recurrent pattern suggests that a more comprehensive theory remains to be developed.

Our qualitative discussion also illuminates how legislators combine the introduction of impeachment resolutions with cosponsorship. Argentina and Brazil similarly allow private citizens to petition for the impeachment of the president, but patterns of collaboration between legislators and civil society vary in each case. In Argentina, where the party system is less fragmented and presidents enjoy stronger legislative contingents, coordination

between opposition parties and social movements to destabilize the government takes place in the streets, not in the legislature. In Brazil, where the party system is highly fragmented and presidential coalitions are fragile, legislators collaborate with civil society leaders who introduce most impeachment petitions. Like their counterparts in Argentina, Brazil's opposition parties may coordinate with social movements in the streets—left-wing groups were part of the massive protests against Fernando Collor in 1992, and right-wing movements were part of the protests that called for the ousting of Dilma Rousseff in 2016. But in contrast to the case in Argentina, the most important locus of political action is Congress. Brazilian legislators and citizens produce a combined response to public unrest.

Although the use of impeachment resolutions as a tool of representation is in principle reassuring, the problematic side of this legislative practice lies in its partisan nature. Impeachment resolutions may ignite a crisis in the few instances when, for rather idiosyncratic reasons, as in Brazil in 2016, those resolutions move forward. Impeaching an unpopular president before the end of the term will bring immediate relief to unhappy voters, but the literature suggests that it may also encourage executive-legislative conflict in the future (Helmke 2017; Marsteintredet 2014).

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NOTES

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1. We follow the US convention and refer to impeachment proposals as “resolutions” introduced in Congress. However, the legal term in both countries literally translates into impeachment “requests,” which are technically different from congressional resolutions because private citizens can also introduce such requests.

2. In some unicameral systems, the legislature removes presidential immunity and allows a trial by the Supreme Court or the lower courts.

3. Some constitutions assign another institution, normally the Supreme Court, to act as the jury, but Congress (in bicameral legislatures, the Chamber of Deputies) still discusses and approves the decision to accuse the president.

4. Presidents Collor de Mello (1992, Brazil), Pérez (1993, Venezuela), Cubas (1999, Paraguay), Lugo (2012, Paraguay), Pérez Molina (2015, Guatemala), Rouseff (2016, Brazil), Kuczynski (2018, Peru) were impeached. Presidents Bucaram (1997, Ecuador) and Gutiérrez (2005, Ecuador) were dismissed on grounds of incapacity and abandonment of post.

5. Jair Bolsonaro (PP/RJ) in 2015 and Laerte Rodrigues Bessa (PR/DF) in 2016 against Dilma Rouseff, and João Gualberto Vasconcelos (PSDB/BA) against Michel Temer in 2017.

6. Few legislative bodies are in fact able to meet the high standards of a thorough investigative process. Studies of Latin American legislatures show a great variance in terms of legislatures’ professionalization (Alcántara Sáez and García Montero 2011; Crisp and Schibber 2014; Morgenstern and Nacif 2002) and different levels of congressional institutionalization (Palanza, Scartascini, and Tomassi 2016).

7. There were also a few historical cases in Brazil: an impeachment process against Getúlio Vargas was rejected by the lower chamber in 1954. The following year, presidents Carlos Luz and João Café Filho were removed from office when Congress—under military pressure—declared that they were unable to discharge their duties (Dulles 1970). See <http://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2016/08/31/doi-presidentes-do-brasil-sofreram-impeachment-em-1955>.

8. Supreme Court judges were also impeached in 1946–47. In February 1976, the lower house briefly discussed impeaching María E. Martínez de Perón (Serrafero 1996, 154). Previously, the Chamber of Deputies had only once voted on an impeachment (which it rejected). The impeachment resolution was directed at President Julio A. Roca in 1904 (Molinelli, Palanza, and Sin 1999, 512).

9. Article 7 of the Internal Regulation of the Impeachment Committee of the Argentine Chamber of Deputies.

10. Article 218 of the Internal Regulation of the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil, approved by resolution 22 of 1992.

11. Impeachment in Brazil is regulated by Law 1.079/50, article 218 of the Internal Regulations of the Chamber of Deputies, and by the ruling (ADPF) n. 378 of the Federal Supreme Tribunal.

12. To explain the variability of Latin American legislatures in terms of their capability to participate in policymaking, researchers have looked at previous investments in organization (education, organization, resources) and at the expectations and beliefs of various actors (legislators, expert opinions, the general public). Brazil appears better positioned than Argentina (after Chile and Uruguay) (Palanza, Scartascini, and Tommasi 2016).

13. In Argentina, IPSOS surveys reflect the percentage of respondents who “aprueban (mucho, algo) la manera en la que se está manejando el gobierno nacional” in a given month. Before 2004, the wording was slightly different, and categories reflect an evaluation of “buena” or “muy buena” of the government. Information prior to October 1984 comes from a single poll conducted by Edgardo Catterberg in April 1984. Brazil’s CNI-IBOPE surveys reflect an “avaliação do governo” as “Ótimo/Bom.”

14. Roll-call votes were scarce throughout the 1980s and until middle of the 1990s. For those years, we looked at official congressional documents, such as *Información Parlamentaria* (s/d).

15. Following Carlin et al. (2018), the last quarter refers to the quarter prior to a scheduled presidential election, not the last quarter for presidents ousted from office or for their successors completing the term.

16. Lula also faced 36 impeachment requests introduced by citizens. Most of them followed from three major scandals: corruption in the postal system, money laundering through bingo parlors, and most famously, the “big monthly payments” to coalition parties in exchange for votes in the Chamber of Deputies (the so-called *Mensalão* scandal). Lula had strong public support, and deputies did not echo citizens’ initiatives. However, Congress created three investigative committees.

17. Because national accounts report GDP on a quarterly basis, we computed monthly growth as the geometric mean of GDP change for the quarter. Other variables were reaggregated monthly.

18. This concern is obviously reinforced for monthly observations because the average frequency of resolutions initiated by legislators is 0.09 per month.

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