Democracy and Protest: the Dynamics of Government Responses to Mass Demonstrations in Argentina and Brazil in 2012-13

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Introduction

The Kirchner governments in Argentina and the Da Silva/Rousseff administrations in Brazil are well known examples of what have been termed 'social movements' governments' that combine strengthened state institutions with arms-length relations with popular, civil society and labor groups (Cardoso and Gindin, 2009, p. 13). The question of what happens when such governments are in turn confronted by widespread protest mobilizations is worthy of further investigation. The experience of large-scale anti-government protests in Argentina and Brazil in 2012-13 not only enables a novel comparative assessment of this issue, but also provides cases that elucidate the operation of two contrasting centrifugal and centripetal models of government responses to protest and their outcomes, which have the potential to be applied to other contexts.

While considerable literature on popular mobilization in Latin America has developed in recent years, much of it has been dedicated to challenges to the military governments of the 1980s, or to protests in the context of neoliberal reforms and economic crisis in the 1990s and early 2000s (Escobar, 2010; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2011; Franklin, 2013). A number of studies have treated new grassroots popular movements in Argentina, such as the unemployed and recovered factories (Blanco,

2011; Cortés, 2008; Dinerstein, 2010; Malamud, 2013; Massetti, 2010; Pérez and Natalucci, 2010) as well as the large rural protest in 2008 (Aronskind and Vommaro, 2011; Fairfield, 2011; Richardson, 2009; Rigotti, 2013), but literature on the protests of 2012-13 remains limited. In relation to Brazil, where prior to 2012 protests in relation to Workers' Party governments had been insubstantial, even in response to the *Mensalão* scandal (Bruera, 2013), there is similarly limited literature on the wave of protests since the '*Dia do basta*' anti-corruption protests in 2012 (Saad-Filho, 2013). Furthermore, there is as yet no comparative study of the protests in Argentina and Brazil in 2012-13.

In contrast to existing studies of protest in Latin America that concentrate on causes of protest in the post-democratization era (such as Bellinger & Arce (2011), this article is focused on the dynamics and outcomes of the protests and, in particular, of the governments' contrasting responses to these protests. It will be argued that the protests, not channeled into conventional political party divisions, have contributed to shape new opposition politics in both countries, favoring disenchanted elements of the ruling parties, new leaderships, and opponent groups. They have served to re-invigorate democracy in the context of comparatively dominant and popular governments (Hunter, 2007; Levitsky and Murillo, 2008; De Souza, 2013).

It is argued in this article that despite the pre-eminence acquired by the ruling parties and their Presidents in the two countries, it would be misleading to characterize these countries as unstable 'delegative democracies' (O'Donnell, 1994). That Argentine and Brazilian politics have been moving away from a delegative democratic model over the last decade is widely claimed (Mazzuca, 2010; Wiarda and Kline, 2011). This article considers both countries to be stable democracies, albeit with their own particularities – more super-presidential and illiberal in the Argentine case (Mazzuca,

2013), and more competitive and coalitional for Brazil (Power, 2010). On this premise, this article is concerned with the dynamic interplay of protest and government response in this process, and its effect over democratic politics. Accordingly, it is argued that the dynamics of protest and government response in 2012-13 have resulted in the enhancement of features of representative democracy in Argentina and participatory and deliberative democracy in Brazil. In so doing, this article goes beyond existing studies of social movements and democratic politics, which have tended to consider the dynamics of contention in relation to democratic transitions but not democracy after transition (Della Porta, 2013).

An exploration of the governmental responses to the waves of protest in Argentina and Brazil in 2012-13 serves to illustrate two contrasting models of democratic government responses to protests and their impact, which have the potential to be applied in other contexts. While substantial attention has been paid in existing literature on social movements to the significance to protesters of political opportunity structures, work on framing processes has tended to focus much more on the frames of protesters and their effects than on the framing strategies of governments and their consequences (Noakes, 2000). This article aims in part to address this deficit by exploring the contrasting counterframing strategies of the Argentine and Brazilian governments in response to the 2012-13 protests and the consequences of these strategies for the protests, government and opposition institutions, and in turn democracy. In so doing, this article provides two new models for understanding the dynamics of contentious politics (McAdam et al., 2002; Tilly and Tarrow, 2007).

The protests in Argentina and Brazil in 2012-13 are of particular utility to the exploration of the dynamics of contemporary contentious politics because they have common features representative of protests in the twenty-first century. In each case,

protest diffused rapidly, and involved widespread, socially diverse, and comparatively leaderless mobilization facilitated by social media characteristic of the contemporary era. In both Argentina and Brazil, the demands put forward by the protesters were also similar, such as addressing corruption, improving transparency, and investing in infrastructure. Given the similarities in the characteristics of the protests with which the governments in Argentina and Brazil were confronted, these cases provide an effective opportunity to explore the contrasting outcomes of different government strategies in response to protest. Further enhancing the utility of these cases is the similarity of the governments in each country. Both the PT administrations in Brazil and the Kirchnerist governments in Argentina since 2003 outlined relatively similar models of model of state-society relations, are considered representative of the 'moderate' Latin American left, and have enjoyed high levels of popularity owing in large part to their socially-oriented policies and their close relations with other social actors, in particular organised labour, civil society, and popular sectors (Arditi, 2008; Becker, 2013; Castañeda, 2006; Ciccariello-Maher, 2013; Ellner, 2012; Escobar, 2010; Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2009, 2012; Panizza, 2009; Phillips, 2004; Weyland et al., 2010).[1]

Despite the considerable advances in the development of dynamic models for the study of social movements in recent years, there is considerable scope for greater integration of insights from the literature on framing contests and counterframing and that on the relationship between social movements, party politics, and democracy. To date, literature on framing processes has commonly concentrated upon the dynamics of framing and framing contests in themselves (Benford and Snow, 2000; Esacove, 2004), rather than the impacts of framing processes for national democratic politics. Similarly,

[1] Mazzuca (2013), Pereira & Melo (2012), and Levitsky & Roberts (2013) distinguish Brazil as a more liberal institutionalised political system, and Argentina, as a more concentrated populist one.

literature considering the relationship between social movements and national democratic institutions, such as Kitschelt (1993)'s disaggregation of cyclical and structural differentiation models, tends to evaluate the issue independently from the framing literature. This article suggests that a better understanding of the relationship between social movements and national democratic institutions can be obtained if such literatures are bridged. Central to the bridging of the literatures on social movements, framing processes and democracy will be utilization of insights from literature on boundary construction (Lamont and Molnár, 2002), which despite becoming increasingly important in the study of social movements (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007), has significant scope for greater application (Gallo-Cruz, 2012, p. 25). By considering the relationship between governmental counterframing strategy and party politics and democracy, this article advances a more integrated and dynamic approach to study of protest in contemporary democratic politics.

Introducing the Centrifugal and Centripetal Models

When confronted with protest, democratic governments have a range of options with respect to response. These include physical strategies for containment and suppression of protests through the use of police and armed forces, as well as political strategies such as new legislation that responds to protesters' demands. The choice that is explored in this article is between an oppositional approach to counterframing and an approach based on 'boundary negotiation' (Gallo-Cruz, 2012). As the subsequent section of this article will show, when confronted with similar protests in 2012-13, the Argentine government chose the former strategy and the Brazilian government the latter strategy, and the results were contrasting centrifugal and centripetal dynamics for opposition politics and democracy, which have been summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Centrifugal and Centripetal Models of Democratic Government Response to Protest – Simplified Version

	Centrifugal Model	*Centripetal Model*
Government Counterframing Strategy	Oppositional / Boundary Distinction & Activation	Boundary Negotiation & Deactivation
Impact on Opposition Politics	Polarization / Opposition Expansion	Co-optation / Opposition Contraction
Form of Democracy Strengthened	Representational	Participatory / Deliberative

In the study of social movements framing refers to 'the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers', and protesters deploy 'collective action frames' defined as 'action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization' (Benford and Snow, 2000, pp. 613–4). Counterframing refers to 'opponents' attempts to rebut, undermine or neutralize the movement's collective action frames' (Zuo and Benford, 1995, p. 139). Counterframing is most commonly understood in terms of 'oppositional stances' such as 'explicitly countering opponents' diagnostic claims' and 'diversionary reframing of which issues are most pertinent to the debate', as well as 'boundary distinction' intended 'to clearly distinguish movement protagonists and antagonists' (Gallo-Cruz, 2012). Such an approach to counterframing by a government in response to protest is characteristic of the onset of the centrifugal model: it involves 'boundary activation', i.e. 'increase … in the salience of the us-them distinction separating two political actors' (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007, p. 215). In the centripetal model, on the other hand, an alternative counterframing strategy is deployed involving 'boundary negotiation', i.e. 'the discursive effort to define a contested social object as existing within collectively held boundaries' (Gallo-Cruz, 2012) and thereby

resulting in ‘boundary deactivation’, i.e. ‘decrease in the salience of the us-them distinction separating two political actors’ (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007, p. 215).

In this article, we argue that the process of boundary activation in the centrifugal model results in the polarization of national politics, with an increasingly clear distinction developing between those identified with the party or parties of government, and those associated with the opposition. Scope for compromise between government and protesters is reduced; and those participating in the protests, despite the divisions that may exist among them, are demarcated together on the other side of the boundary from the government and its supporters. When the protesters are drawn from a wide spectrum of society, the result may be the strengthening of the opposition, since the divisions among the protesters become less salient than the increasingly significant boundary that distinguishes them all from the government and its supporters. This may result in greater electoral success for the opposition, and thereby the strengthening of representative democracy, for which a core feature is understood to be competitive party politics (Held, 1995, p. 65).

In the centripetal model, on the other hand, the process of boundary negotiation and deactivation results in the reverse dynamics. The distinction between the government and its opponents becomes less clear, as the government seeks to identify commonalities between its frames and those of the protesters. Scope for compromise between government and protesters is increased, and those participating in the protests become divided between those prepared to compromise with and become co-opted by the government, and the radical flanks that either refuse or are not invited to do so. The opposition is therefore weakened on account of this division, and thereby democracy is arguably not enhanced in terms of traditional representative conceptualizations emphasizing competitive party politics. However, the compromises necessitated by the

government's strategy of boundary negotiation may result in political reforms and new consultative mechanisms between the government and those taking part in the protests with whom it compromises, which have the potential to enhance participatory and deliberative democracy (Schönleitner, 2006).

Prelude to the storm: Mobilisations and government frames, 2003-2012

The governmental frames deployed in the 2012-13 result from two different trajectories of contentious politics developed during the preceding decade. In Argentina, the social turmoil after the 2001 debt default crisis had lasting consequences on 'public policy, popular-sector interest intermediation and partisan politics' over the rest of the decade (Garay, 2007, p. 302). Fundamentally, it consolidated a pattern of state-society relations which favored direct relations with certain sectors of the citizenship over organized representation through political parties (Anton et al., 2011; Blanco, 2011; Levitsky & Murillo, 2008; Svampa, 2011). The 2001 crisis ended the Argentine quasi-bipartisan system, whereby the Peronist Party (PJ), of workerist and lower-class extraction, confronted a traditional middle-class party, the UCR. The decline of the UCR consolidated the preeminence of the Peronist movement in Argentine politics. After 2003 the latter rallied behind the faction of President Kirchner and his new party – the *Frente para la Victoria* or FPV – which moved rapidly to subordinate other political institutions, such as Congress, the judicial system, provincial governments, and sectors of the opposition (Chernyet et al., 2010; De Riz, 2009; Etchemendy, 2006; Levitsky & Murillo, 2008).

From the start, Kirchnerism promoted a populist, leftist, and statist discourse based on the 'national-popular' ideal that the Peronist movement claims to embody (Muñoz and Retamozo, 2008; Philip and Panizza, 2011; Svampa, 2011). The Kirchner

administration expanded social transfers, benefits and pensions, gaining substantial popular support and reducing contention from unemployed workers' movements and labor (Etchemendy and Garay, 2011; Garay, 2007). Simultaneously, President Kirchner sought to distinguish his administration from the *'partidocracia'* of the past, characterizing the Church, the military, and business as the 'destroyers of the Nation' (Barbosa, 2010, p. 29), and republican institutions as elitist and conservative. Carlos Pagni, the senior political analyst of the *La Nación* newspaper, described the political strategy of Kirchnerism as 'blowing up the center' (Genoud et al., 2013): presenting domestic politics and society divided along antagonistic lines (Cavarozzi, 2012; Levitsky and Murillo, 2008).

The crystallisation of the Kirchnerist approach to framing occurred during the four-month long rural protests of 2008, the largest mobilisations in the country since 2001 (Hora, 2010; Richardson, 2009; Rzezak, 2008). The government reacted aggressively, framing the conflict as a 'dispute for the political direction of the country' (Anton et al., 2011, p. 111). During a series of public speeches President Fernández referred to the rural pickets as the 'pickets of abundance' and to the middle-class pot-bangers as 'confused posh ladies' clapping alongside defenders of the 'genocide'[2] and radical reformers (Mengo and Pizarro, 2013). The President repeatedly framed the mobilizations as an attack by elites over popular interests, considering them selfish and anti-patriotic (Rzezak, 2008). Other governmental figures referred to protest leaders and participants through derogatory ideological epithets such as 'oligarchs', '*gorila*' (anti-peronist), '*golpistas*' (pro-coup), and as '*destituyentes*' (actions intending to overthrow the government), the latter a term coined by a Kirchnerist group of

[2] The term used by certain sectors of the Argentine left to refer to the murderous activities of the last military junta.

intellectual figures called *Carta Abierta* (Hora, 2010). It was also during this conflict that the government declared independent media groups, in particular *Clarín* and *La Nación*, as enemies, guilty of misguiding the citizenship and of fuelling social tension (Calvo and Murillo, 2012). The government, albeit failing to counterbalance the protests, was successful in terms of casting its polarized framing upon society,[3] the same framing that would resurface in the events of 2012-2013 (Svampa, 2011).

In contrast with the Argentine case, state-society relations in Brazil were not marked by the effects of a major political and social crisis, but rather by the arrival of the Workers' Party (PT) and Lula da Silva to the Presidency (Hunter, 2007; Ribeiro, 2008; Samuels, 2004; Sola, 2008). Lula institutionalized diverse participatory and neo-corporatist approaches over more informal and personalistic practices. These techniques included initiatives such as participatory budgeting, which the PT pioneered during the 1990s in its municipal and state governments, public consultation conferences, and the creation of multi-sectoral national policy councils (Avritzer, 2009; Doctor, 2007; Friedman and Hochstetler, 2002; Souza, 2001). The Lula government also resorted to co-opting the leaders of key social sectors into the administration, de-activating boundaries between the government and the most contentious elements of civil society, labor, and business (De Oliveira, 2006; Ribeiro, 2008; Ross Schneider, 2009; Singer, 2009; Wampler, 2012; Wolford, 2006).

As a result of this, and of the good economic performance during the 2010s, the Lula government experienced low levels of protest in a society already characterized by infrequent mass mobilizations (Samuels, 2006): prior to 2013 the last significant anti-governmental demonstrations took place during the impeachment of President De

[3] By 2013, this distinction had become so ingrained in Argentina's collective imaginary that journalist Jorge Lanata referred to it simply as '*la grieta*' (the crack) (Lanata, 2013).

Mello in 1992 (Pereira et al., 2011). Nonetheless, from 2005 onwards the PT did start to lose support among certain sectors of civil society and the middle-class, as the party was rocked by accusations of corruption and vote-buying in what is known as the *Mensalão* scandal (Flynn, 2005; Pereira et al., 2011). By 2008, the industrialist and pro-market policies of the PT had disenchanted rural, labor, and environmental sectors, leading to growing disaffections by the more radical elements (Galvao et al., 2011; Hochstetler & Viola, 2012; Hochstetler, 2008).

Middle-class contention became gradually activated in the early 2010s, during the Rousseff government. The new administration faced the slowdown of the Brazilian economy and the threat of rising inflation, receiving mounting pressure from the conservative media, economists, and financial markets to adopt more orthodox economic policies (Ban, 2013; Morais and Saad-Filho, 2012). Moreover, Rousseff shunned some of the populist practices of '*Lulismo'*, turning away 'trade unions, left-wing NGOs and the MST in order to pursue a progressive technocratic agenda' (Saad-Filho and Morais, 2014, p. 236). A major element of contention, particularly among middle-class sectors and the media (in particular the anti-government *Veja* Magazine and *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper) was the issue of corruption. In October 2011, around 20,000 people marched in the streets of Brasilia, with smaller protests in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and other cities, calling for the end of secret voting in the Congress and the passing of anti-corruption and transparency laws (Clausen, 2012; MCCE, 2012). President Rousseff reacted positively to these demonstrations, firing over 17 top officials accused of corrupt practices, including her Chief of Cabinet and the Minister of Transport (Pereira, 2011). The protests did not tarnish the figure of the President, who capitalized on her strategy of distancing from and removing suspected figures protected during the Lula governments. In this sense, PT governments were

successful in maintaining social peace through the decade. This calmness of the long 'tropical winter' (Vieira, 2013) would be abruptly interrupted by the events of 2013.

The 2012/2013 mobilisations and governmental counterframing

This section analyses the protests that took place between September 2012 and April 2013 in Argentina and during the months of June and July 2013 in Brazil. The two cases will be analyzed according to the three dimensions outlined in Figure 1 characterizing the Centrifugal and Centripetal Models of Democratic Government Response, respectively: Government Counterframing Strategy, Impact on Opposition Politics, and Form of Democracy Strengthened.

Argentina: Boosting the opposition

The cycle of anti-governmental protests in Argentina involved three mass mobilizations occurring in the evenings of 13 September 2012, 8 November 2012, and 18 April 2013.[4] These 'cacerolazos' were locally referred to by their date acronyms, respectively 13-S, 8-N and 18-A, which this article will keep for simplicity. The political context prior to the events was marked by the strong position of President Fernández, who had been re-elected in 2011 with 54% of the votes, beating the second contender by a 37% margin. This had emboldened the FPV, leading some of its figures to suggest the possibility of a Constitutional reform enabling a third consecutive mandate for the president (Calvo and Murillo, 2012; LPO, 2012). However, during 2012 four events tainted the euphoria of this electoral triumph. First, early in 2012 an accident in one of Buenos Aires' main train stations, resulting in 51 killed and 700 wounded, led to a strong debate about the

[4] A fourth protest on 8 August, on the eve of the Congressional primary elections, draw substantially less attendance.

state's responsibility for the poor state of public transport and overall infrastructure, and to the resignation and indictment of both the minister of Transport and his predecessor on corruption and malpractice accusations. Second, the FPV experienced the end of its alliance with the labor movement, when the leader of the powerful labor federation CGT, Hugo Moyano, created a non-aligned labor federation. Third, the government had accentuated its conflict with the media, passing an anti-monopoly media law, an issue with significant salience in public opinion. Fourth, the economic context characterized by deceleration of growth, rising double-digit inflation, and decaying monetary reserves, led the government to impose unpopular currency controls restricting the free acquisition of dollars (Tagina and Varetto, 2013).

The dates set for the protests were virtually coordinated by individual bloggers opposed to the Kirchner administration, but diffusion occurred virally through informal contacts, mailing lists, and social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, with no organized group leading the protests (Marquez, 2012; Pagni, 2012). The number of people mobilized is disputed: police sources estimated 220,000 and 500,000 protesters for the first two events in downtown Buenos Aires alone – excluding protests throughout the rest of the country – and *La Nación* mentioned around one million people for the third event, which included protests in front of Argentine embassies around the world (BBC, 2013a; Nación, 2013). The protesters rallied different sectors of Argentine society, mostly from the urban upper and middle classes, but including elements of non-aligned labor and other social organizations. The protests did not present a unified demand, but manifested a diversity of themes signaling dissatisfaction with the government. Recurrent themes were crime levels, rising prices, deteriorating quality of living and public services, corruption, freedom of press, the advance of the executive over other state powers and institutions, excessive state interventionism in

the economy and currency controls, and the eventual 're-re-election' of the president (Kollmann, 2012a). Lastly, the protests did not radicalize or result in major violent outbursts or police repression, nor did they spread into secondary events.

Government Counterframing Strategy

The governmental response to the protests was based on an oppositional strategy aiming to delegitimize the protesters and their motives. As the protests increased in size this approach was somewhat moderated, but nonetheless remained dominant through the three events. After the 13-S protest, the leader of the FPV's Congressional bloc Agustín Rossi published a column in the pro-government newspaper *Página 12* titled 'Violent and Organized', questioning the spontaneity of the protests and the supposed ideological neutrality of the protesters. In his view, the protests had been fuelled by the pro-opposition media and other conservative groups and, even when not identifying with a political party, the protesters were not 'neutral', stating that 'the right [wing] never sleeps' (Rossi, 2012). A similar view was held by the Chief of Staff Abal Medina, who considered that the mobilization represented the discontent of a traditional minority historically opposed to 'policies of social inclusion, the defence of labor, and national industry'. Moreover, he resorted to class-oriented epithets and metaphors: the protesters 'did not step on the grass' on the government square (*Plaza de Mayo*) 'in order to avoid getting dirty' and they were people more interested in events in 'Miami than in San Juan', a poor province from the Argentine North-West (DyN, 2012).[5] Similarly, the director of the National Library and one of the co-founders of *Carta Abierta* titled an article '¿El medio pelo en la calle?' (The *medio pelo* in the street?).[6]

[5] In the Argentine collective imaginary, Miami is commonly used to refer to a tacky tourist destination, stereotypically chosen by newly arrived middle-classes during the 1990s. See also the following footnote.
[6] *Medio pelo* is a term in Argentine slang popularised by Peronist authors in the 1960s to refer to the upper strata of the middle class, indicating individuals that pretend a status they do not possess (Jauretche, 1967).

In his view, the protests were worthy of attention, 'even when' they included mobilized sectors of the far-right, disoriented 'ladies that just left the shopping mall', supporters of the rural aristocracy, and racist and class-prejudiced components of the middle classes (González, 2012).

Another tactic of the government was to frame the protests as a symptom reflecting the weakness of the opposition. The protests were portrayed as revealing the lack of leadership and incapacity of opposition parties and their inability to channel the demands of a historically anti-Peronist sector of society that lost its representation after 2001. A few hours after the 8-N protests President Fernández stated: 'This is the problem of contemporary Argentine politics: the absence of a political leadership that presents *us* with an alternative political project, but that is not our fault. We believe in our project, it is the job of those that don't believe in it to create ideas and proposals to deal with what the *rest* of society wants' (Pagina12, 2012a).[7] Diverse government officials reproduced this stance: the ruling administration would not react to protesters' complaints because there is 'no clear claim', but rather the disorganized discontent of anti-government sectors lacking leadership (Lantos, 2012a).

This distinction enabled the government to outline a clear boundary between the protesters and the rest of the population: the Kirchner government represented the '54%' (the percentage of votes the President obtained in 2011) and the protesters were part of the rest, an anti-Kirchnerist minority. Because of this, the protests were portrayed as illegitimate as they challenged a democratically elected government with considerable popular support, a fundamental difference with the legitimate *cacerolazos* of 2001. Therefore, the protesters were not the 'People' but those against it: elites, concentrated groups, and the *medio pelo* middle-class. Pro-government analysts used

[7] Translations from Spanish and Portuguese belong to the authors.

the argument that the protests expressed the discontent of a minority to dismiss their overall relevance. After 13-S, sociologist Artemio López commented that they would not have electoral impact as they involved issues with low national salience, reflecting the concerns of the upper classes of Buenos Aires and the larger cities (Kollmann, 2012b).

At the same time, the President linked the role of the conservative media with the lack of legitimacy of the protests, installing 'phrases, titles, that when they [the protestors] were asked about their meaning could not explain nor develop […] it is simply repeating what they read or see on TV' (Pagina12, 2012a). The government kept reinforcing boundary distinction: in another speech on November 10th the President stated that 'some want to make us return to the ultra-conservative regime that ruined the country', referring to both protesters and the liberal groups pressing for more orthodox economic policies (Pagina12, 2012b). Pro-government journalist Horacio Verbitsky thus challenged the conservative mayor of Buenos Aires, Mauricio Macri, to pick this glove and try to channel the 'rightist' social discontent prior to the Congressional elections of 2013 (Verbitsky, 2012).

The confident and antagonistic governmental response to the first two events moderated after the 18-A, with the 2013 elections looming and the protests growing in size. The Presidency did not make any immediate reference to the new protests: her only 'tweets' on that day referred to a decision by the Supreme Court against the media law, questioning the independence of the Judicial Power and the 'actual interests' behind this decision (DiarioVeloz, 2013)[8]. Nor did she make any official reference to the protests in the following days (Presidencia, 2014). Ministers and high public

[8] President Fernández is an avid Twitter user, commonly posting several tweets a day and counting with approximately 2.5 million followers.

officials, avid commentators during the previous two cases, reproduced this silence. Only four days after the event was the Minister of Planning Julio De Vido reported to have provided the first official comment, briefly suggesting that the pot-bangers complained because they wanted to go to Miami (and this was made difficult because of the currency controls) (Cadena3, 2013). A hawkish Kirchnerist Congressman, Carlos Kunkel, is also reported to have answered media inquiries about this silence by saying that the government 'was too busy ruling' to mind about the protests, while the leader of the FPV Congress bloc celebrated the event because it confirmed that 'there is democracy in Argentina' (Herald, 2013). The new official strategy was also evidenced in the media. *Página 12* and other pro-government news venues, which in the previous two events had printed numerous columns by high-ranking government officials, after 18-A only presented opinion pieces and descriptive comments by their journalists and tertiary analysts, mostly framed along the lines of the exclusive Kirchnerist discourse.

This evidence suggests that this silence was a strategy consciously deployed by the government to remove visibility from the protests given that the previous confrontational strategy had not been successful in deactivating the mobilizations. The following section proposes that the initial governmental counterframing response had already activated a boundary distinction among protestors and important sectors of Argentine society, which then contributed towards the political activation and expansion of organized opposition.

Impact on Opposition Politics

The counterframing strategy of the government – aiming to cast the dualistic Kirchnerist framing upon the mobilizations in order to delegitimize them – was relatively successful, as the protests did rally a diversity of social sectors and interests;

from reactionary anti-Kirchnerists to individuals discontent with the attitude of the President, the level of crime, inflation, corruption, and/or currency controls. By the time of the 8-N, the government had stepped up this boundary distinction by framing the mobilizations as masses without a leader, while making it clear that this leadership would not come from itself: in the words of President Fernández, 'she could not represent everybody' (Casullo, 2013). This second tactic, intended to highlight the weakness of the opposition and making the protest their responsibility, followed the premise that the protesters were an urban minority: those that had lost the previous elections and would never vote for the Kirchner government anyway.

In the beginning, it was clear that opposition parties were also uncertain of how to proceed, considering that formal support for the protests could tarnish the spontaneous character of the mobilizations, but also the high risk of being publicly shunned by the protesters. However, as the government framing consolidated towards the second protest, different political groups decided to start endorsing the mobilizations. Congresswoman Patricia Bullrich (former Minister of Labor under the De la Rúa administration, now in a single-person party) stated that she would attend the march without political flags, carrying posters with general slogans 'like any regular citizen' (Lantos, 2012b). Mauricio Macri, leader of the conservative party PRO, tweeted before the second protest 'On the 8-N let's raise only one flag, the Argentine one'. This provoked an immediate response from the Chief of Staff who commented that Macri ought instead be dedicating himself to governing his city, and from a FPV Senator considering this a confirmation that the right-wing had been financing the events all along (Ambito, 2012). During the second protest PRO members reportedly distributed national flags and blue and white ribbons. Other opposition party leaders and dissident labor groups also made similar statements of support but refrained from

attending the events, and Macri himself posted a picture on Twitter showing he had watched the marches on TV (Perfil, 2012). This cautious stance changed by the third event. The last protest was characterized by active and visible involvement from opposition figures, which positioned themselves at the front of different marches throughout the country. This involved groups and personalities across the political spectrum, including the socialists, the UCR, the center-left party *Proyecto Sur*, and PRO (Lanacion, 2013a; Pagina12, 2013). The strategy of the opposition by this time had become pro-active: it aimed at reinforcing the anti-government distinction the government framing had contributed to exacerbate, while not introducing internal partisan themes. Thus, different parties openly supported the 18-A mobilization, their leaders walked among the crowds, but party columns, symbols, and slogans remained absent.[9]

The reaction of both the government and opposition reflects the dynamic changes in the political context as the boundary distinction was activated. While this emboldened opposition activism, by the third protest the government adopted a more cautious and less confrontational tactic, not exposing its leading figures, in particular those that would participate in the coming elections. It can be postulated that the government miscalculated that boundary activation and polarization would not translate into opposition expansion, possibly on the basis that if opposition parties got involved, this would contribute towards dissolving the anti-government scene along partisan lines. Moreover, during the first two events the opposition seemed partially to share this diagnosis. However, by the time of the 18-A the polarization of the protests was complete: the government had made consistently clear that these were not against the

[9] The pro-government press noticed that the third protest had been more organized and less aggressive, with banners promoting republican mottos and demands rather than personal insults to the President and other government figures (Rodríguez, 2013).

political establishment as a whole, but specifically against President Fernández and her party. This centrifugal logic drove opposition expansion. Diverse opposition figures started to highlight the urgency of establishing a common political agenda in order to capitalize on the social discontent: socialist leader Hermes Binner, for example, argued that the protests were a 'demand for unity', and that even if it was impossible to unify all the opposition, this should nonetheless be attempted. This vision was shared by the PRO, on the other side of the ideological spectrum (InfoR, 2013). A month after the last protest, two leaders of the center left, Elisa Carrió and Fernando Solanas, proposed a new 'anti-corruption' front (Rosemberg, 2013). The looming election also forced undecided parties, such as the UCR, to adopt a more active stance: Gustavo Posse, a UCR figure, stated the day after 18-A that 'the opposition ought to constitute a common front' (Pertot, 2013). Alliance building became the rule in the months prior to the August primaries anticipating the October elections. In this regard, one of the first major outcomes of the protests for party politics was the formation in June 2013 of a wide center-left front, under the acronym UNEN, composed by the UCR (of Buenos Aires City), the socialists, Proyecto Sur, the party of Carrió, and a few others. The second key outcome was the emergence of a dissident 'post-Kirchnerist' faction, led by the charismatic mayor of Tigre County Sergio Massa, who had been Chief of Staff of Cristina Kirchner between 2008 and 2009. Also in June, Massa broke with the FPV and created his own party, called *Frente Renovador* (Renovation Front), focusing on the Greater Buenos Aires area, the most important electoral district in the country. This front, a Peronist center-right coalition, adopted many of the central claims of the protests as part of its agenda: in particular issues of crime and inflation, but also the promotion of less confrontational politics and collaboration with other parties and

business.[10] Following this, PRO and the *Frente Renovador* evaluated the possibility of a broader alliance, which ultimately did not materialize, but nonetheless set some common ground to face the FPV in the primaries (Bullrich, 2013; Lanacion, 2013b). Early in 2014, with the government pressured by deteriorating economic circumstances, UNEN hinted at the possibility of forming a wide right-left coalition with Macri's PRO, to prevent a new Peronist presidency (Sola, 2014).

Form of Democracy Strengthened

Political polarization and opposition expansion in Argentina contributed towards the strengthening of representational democracy. The protests reinforced, and to some extent revived, a competitive party system that had virtually disappeared after 2001, as Kirchnerism consolidate a super-presidential government which could rule without an organized opposition or strong republican institutions (Cavarozzi, 2012; De Luca and Malamud, 2010; Mazzuca, 2013; Ramos, 2012).

This landscape changed with the sequence of protests. The opposition gained new voice and momentum, and some figures that had lost popularity, such as Elisa Carrió, returned to the spotlight.[11] Moreover, the opposition organized stronger electoral fronts capable of rallying votes from across the country. Secondly, polarization resulted in an unexpected event of major importance: the emergence of a new Peronist faction appealing to non-aligned Peronist elements and the dissident labor movement. In this context, the government's strategy of polarization intended to push

[10] The former head of the Argentine Industrial Union UIA, joined Massa's Front as a Congress candidate, and was elected a few months later.
[11] Carrió had obtained the second place in the presidential elections of 2007 with 23%, but only 1.8% in the 2011 elections.

any opposition to the right was exhausted, as different political groups started to re-populate the political center.

These processes crystallized in the results of the primaries and Congressional elections of 2013. Although given the number of seats being contested the governmental majority in the Chambers was not altered, the government lost in all major urban districts including Buenos Aires city, the larger metropolitan area, Córdoba, Santa Fe, and Mendoza. At national level the Kirchnerist party obtained 33% of the votes, non-aligned Peronism 25%, UNEN 25%, and PRO 8%, so opposition votes outnumbered pro-government ones by two to one (Lanacion, 2013c). Massa defeated the Kirchnerist candidate in Buenos Aires province, the main Peronist stronghold, and immediately became a potential presidential candidate (Lanacion, 2013d). The PFV remained the main party at the national level, but the elections signaled the end of Kirchnerist hegemony. First, they ended any chance of a constitutional reform, requiring 2/3 of the votes in both Chambers, in order to enable a third government by President Fernández. The closing of this door triggered internal competition inside the ruling party to find a successor for the 2015 Presidential elections. This further weakened the pro-government front and led to the emergence of radical/moderate leaders among its ranks, more willing to adopt conciliatory positions with the opposition and the 'traditional' enemies of Kirchnerism.

It is too early to predict whether these tendencies will continue, or to evaluate the 'long-term' sustainability of the new alliances. Nor is this article assuming that the protests were the only causal variable behind the recent developments in Argentine party politics (Calvo and Murillo, 2012; Tagina and Varetto, 2013). However, this section reveals the ways in which the counterframing by the government in response to them

contributed towards renewed opposition strength, and potentially, to more competitive electoral politics in the country in the short term.

Brazil: administering discontent

The protests taking place in Brazil had, from the outset, different dynamics from those in Argentina. The protests began as a minor mobilization on June 6th organized by a small left movement *Movimento Pase Livre* (Free Fare Movement or MPL) against the increase in bus fares in São Paulo from R$3 to R$3.20. The movement, active since 2005,[12] conducted a number of pickets in the city that were initially disbanded by the police, leading to larger marches in the next few days which resulted in more violent clashes and the use of tear gas and rubber bullets. The protests started to spiral and peaked between 17 June – the day the protest is considered to have become national (RevistaH, 2013) – and 20 June, when one million people are reported to have taken the streets and attempts were made by different groups to occupy public buildings, including the National Congress in Brasilia (Estadao, 2013; OGlobo, 2013a). As this happened, the protests received wider media attention locally and internationally – the later partly facilitated by the events coinciding with the Confederation Football Cup (Economist, 2013b) – drawing more participants mostly from young middle class and educated sectors of society, while spreading to other parts of the country.[13] By late June, the protests mobilized significantly more than a million people in hundreds of Brazilian cities, and in early July, labor unions started to launch a series of strikes, culminating with the first general strike since 1991 on 11 July. As in Argentina, the protesters attended the marches raising a multiplicity of slogans dealing mostly with the poor

[12] On the trajectory of the MPL, see MPL (2013) and Lowy (2014).
[13] According to a Datafolha survey of June 18th, 77% of protestors in São Paulo had higher education and 22% were students (Lissardy, 2013).

quality of public services and education, the rising cost of living, political corruption, lack of accountability in public spending, the cost of 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics, and a variety of other issues (Saad-Filho and Morais, 2014). Differing from Argentina, the protests targeted the entire political class as well as the government. Nonetheless, there were reports that PT and PT-allied labor groups attending the marches were challenged and rejected by the crowds (Estadao, 2013). The MPL provided a loose form of leadership in the initial phase, but as discontent spread, different groups self-organized across the country, mostly again through social media. By late June, as opposition parties started to attend the protests, the MPL decided to suspend its calls for mobilization, concerned by the presence of radical conservative and anarchist groups which resorted to acts of violence (Bottini Filho, 2013).[14] This referred in particular to the 'Black blocs', a radical anti-establishment group that attended the protests in black and wearing balaclavas, and targeted the offices of banks, corporations and government buildings with Molotov bombs, while openly clashing with the police (Monteiro, 2013).

The high level of involvement of police forces during the protests is a distinctive characteristic of the Brazilian events. There was recurrent police repression of demonstrators and rioters, infiltration of the marches by police officers and security services, and even a number of casualties as the police faced gangs allegedly using the protest to conduct robberies (Fonseca, 2013, p. 13; Saad-Filho, 2013, p. 659). The cycle of protests lasted through most of July and a new mobilization was called for late August, but by that time the mobilizations had fragmented and participation dwindled.

Government counterframing strategy

[14] In a single day, 85 buses were burned by unidentified groups in São Paulo alone (G1, 2013)

The Rousseff administration responded cautiously to the events. From the start, the government reacted with a moderate discourse aiming to avoid the polarization of the protests between pro and anti-government camps. The first official reference by the President to the events came on 17 June, when some protesters attempted to occupy government buildings. President Rousseff then stated 'pacific demonstrations are legitimate and corresponding with democracy. It is appropriate for young people to mobilize' (Dame, 2013). In the same line, the Secretary-General of the Presidency, Gilberto Carvalho, stated that any mobilization required attention from the government as 'their [the PT's] political project grew through mobilizations. For that reason, we are interested in establishing a debate, an approximation, a dialogue, because these young people have something to say to us' (Ibid.). The following day President Rousseff gave a speech from the *Planalto* Palace, the seat of the federal government, also aimed at bridging the position of protesters and government, while praising the civic behavior of both the police and people in the streets: 'The size of the mobilizations prove the energy of our democracy. The strength of the voice of the streets and the civility of our population. It is good to see so many youngsters and adults, grandson, father and grandfather, together under the flag of Brazil singing the national anthem, saying proudly 'I am Brazilian' and defending a better country. Brazil is proud of you'. Finally, she mentioned that these movements surpassed traditional political mechanisms, political parties and media, and they needed to be listened to and understood (Calgaro, 2013). President Rousseff and her officials repeatedly recognized the legitimacy of the protesters' demands, framing them as policy deficits aligned with the values of the PT. The strategy intended to translate the protests as a warning sign for the government to do better, in the President's words: 'The direct message of the streets is for more citizenship, more schools, better hospitals, the right to participate. This message from

the streets shows the request to improve transportation but with just prices, and the right to influence the decisions of all governments. This message is against corruption and the misappropriation of public funds and proves the intrinsic value of democracy, the mobilization of citizens for their rights' (Ibid.).[15] Similarly, former President Lula da Silva published a column in the Argentine newspaper *Clarín* on 19 June denying the view that the protests were 'anti-political'; rather, they highlighted the need to keep expanding democracy. In this article *Lula* framed the protests as the natural consequence of the social, economic and political successes brought about by the PT: those now with university degrees want better jobs, those with cars, better roads, those enjoying improved public services now want quality, those enjoying a stable country, want better institutions and transparency (Da Silva, 2013). His only call was for the protesters not to reject party politics, but to engage with it and to improve it.

By mid-June, the government rapidly move to establish communications and meetings aiming to negotiate with leading protest figures, and to address some of the broader demands advanced by the mobilizations.[16] Thus, on 24 June the President invited the leaders of the MPL to a meeting, which the movement leaders admitted took them by surprise (MPL, 2013a). Though after the meeting the MPL considered that nothing was agreed, the president then met with governors and mayors and proposed a 'national pact' to reduce corruption, improve service provision, and even reform the political system. Going further, President Rousseff proposed that this latter issue should be decided through national plebiscite, at the same time demonstrating her intention to put the issue this to popular vote, while shifting part of the burden to the Congress and

[15] Marcio Macedo, a PT Congressman said that the protests would strengthen and deepen democracy, as "it is healthier for Brazil the noises made by the young in the streets, than the peace and silence of the graveyards of authoritarian and terror regimes" (Brasil247, 2013).
[16] The government of São Paulo quickly cancelled the raise of the bus fares, but this did not stopped the mobilisations.

opposition parties.[17] This proposed reform, she claimed, should target issues of coalition-making, campaign and party financing, and the general voting system, and other issues such as the hardening of penalties for corruption charges, and the creation of a National Council of Public Transportation with permanent civil society and user representation (BBC, 2013b). On 9 July, the Congress passed a law – approved by the president in September – dictating that the royalties from Petrobras, the oil company partly controlled by the state, should be dedicated entirely to education (75%) and health (25%) (Alencastro and Dame, 2013). On 25 June, the Health Minister announced another major initiative by opening 35,000 physician positions in the national health system, and claiming that foreign doctors would cover part of them. Lastly, on 12 September, the government exempted public transport companies from paying taxes, to contribute to lower fares. These initiatives, and in particular the call for a political reform, received a mixed response from the opposition, but nonetheless were effective in de-activating the core of the conflict.

Impact on Opposition Politics

The strategy of the government was successful in preventing the polarization of the protests as anti-government and their capture by opposition groups. The inclusive strategy aimed at deactivating the boundary between the government and the protesters while portraying the protests as a symptom of a healthy democracy enabled by the achievements of the PT government in the previous years. This does not mean that the political consequences of the protests were completely neutralized. However, a few months after the protests it was clear that President Rousseff had been able to deflect

[17] In the Brazilian political system, only the Congress can call for referendums.

the protests from her figure, and institutionalized many of the demands to be dealt by the government and the party system.

This government strategy acquires greater relevance in light of two circumstances. First, the popularity of President Rousseff fell substantially during and immediately after the protests, with surveys by Datafolha estimating a loss of 20% in a month, leaving her dangerously close to runner-up candidate Marina Silva (Datafolha, 2013). Moreover, many of the protesters were indeed anti-government, targeting both Dilma Rousseff and the PT in general, and major media groups such as O Globo, traditionally anti-PT, emphasized this aspect (Fonseca, 2013). Second, supportive social movements and left-wing analysts proposed a more class-based understanding of the protests, somewhat similar to the claim of 'elite guidance' used by the Kirchner government: the view was that the protests were essentially movements of excluded youngsters being appropriated by the media and elites as an 'anti-PT' event (Leblon, 2013). In this sense, the government's 'centripetal' strategy attempted to resolve what Saad-Filho & Morais (2014, p.240) denominated a 'confluence of dissatisfactions' existing in Brazilian politics: the discontent of the traditional middle-classes and elites from losing ground due to the PT's neo-developmental model, and the discontent of 'new' middle-classes and informal workers that wanted to protect what they had achieved.

By negotiating the boundary between the protest mobilization and government, the PT administration reduced the space for opposition expansion. Thus, when at the onset of the protests the governor of São Paulo, belonging to the opposition party PSDB, referred to the protesters as 'vandals' destroying public patrimony, the President waited and only a week later referred to the events as an expression of a healthy democracy. As a result, former President Cardoso, a historical figure within the PSDB,

posted on his Facebook page that 'disqualifying them [the protestors] as troublemakers is a big mistake' (OGlobo, 2013b). This position was then repeated by José Serra, the current leader of the PSDB and a potential presidential candidate, also on his Facebook page, noting that 'young people have taken to the streets throughout the country and their demands must be heard' (Serra, 2013).

At the same time, by acknowledging the protesters'' claims and the need for reform, the President shifted the burden from her person and the administration to the broader political system and the opposition. In particular, the proposal of political reform was criticized by different sectors as not being realistic: one of the founders of the PT called it 'a joke' (Galhardo, 2013), while a leading PSDB senator complained that this suggestion had been an executive decision out of desperation not consulted with the leaders of Congress (Terra, 2013a). Marina Silva, the leader of a rising environmental movement, also saw the call for a plebiscite as an attempt to narrow the broader claims behind the protests, and make it an issue between 'the Palace [Planalto], the governors, and the Congress' (Terra, 2013b). Nonetheless, the opposition did not manage to consolidate any alternative framing nor could it incentivize polarization without contrasting the inclusive proposal of the government. Thus, the perception was that while the government proposed, the opposition complained. Similarly, the initiative to hire foreign doctors (mainly from Cuba) to expand basic health provision was vigorously blocked by the local medical lobby, which also played in favor of anti-corporate discourses aligned with the PT (Saad-Filho and Morais, 2014, p. 239). Moreover, by the end of June, pro-PT social movements such as the MST and the CUT started to adopt a more assertive stance in the mobilizations. This funneled the protests towards more conventional demands which could be addressed through the

government's negotiation mechanisms, while raising new issues, such as the democratization of the media, which fall within the PT's agenda (Domingues, 2013).

In this sense, the government's centripetal strategy rallied all sectors to the center, favoring the status quo while excluding radicals. By September the president had recovered most of her lost ground in the polls, remaining in the first place, and Marina Silva, who had almost surpassed her at the peak of the mobilizations, had to ally with the Brazilian Socialist Party PSB in order to compete in the 2014 Presidential elections (Azevedo, 2013; Economist, 2013a). By administering boundary distinction President Rousseff also managed to de-activate the moderate core of the protests, represented by groups such as the MLP, which ended up with the option of starting to collaborate with the government on transport policy, or maintaining a contentious posture with little political support from other parties. At the same time, the government managed to de-legitimize radical groups such as the 'Black Bloc', which since July has displaced the MPL from the media spotlight. Zúquete (2014, p. 103) reports that after the June events the Brazilian Intelligence Agency intensified the monitoring of social media to identify violent individuals and criminal evidence, and the Brazilian State of Pernambuco banned the use of masks during protests.

Form of Democracy Strengthened

A number of Brazilian authors have debated whether the protest cycle represented a form of Brazilian Spring or an exceptional flare of social discontent that spiraled due to media diffusion (Domingues, 2013; Saad-Filho and Morais, 2014; Vianna, 2013). By 2014, it appears that it has been more the latter than the former.

The government responded to the protests by proposing new participatory institutions and reforms, reinforcing one of the pillars of the PT's political identity. Moreover,

many of the protestors' demands were translated into reform proposals vis-à-vis the 2014 elections. The new PT campaign slogan for the presidential election of 2013 is '*Fez, faz e fará*' ('did, does, and will do'), adopting a 'new phase' narrative with a renewed (but upgraded) role for the state in public services, urban reform, and investment in education and health. In Lula's words, 'the people went to the street to demand a little bit more of the State' (Rosa, 2013). The governmental framing was that more state meant more PT.

As a result, a centrist consensus emerged in support of peaceful demonstrations and deliberative solutions to social discontent. By early 2014, Black Bloc figures started to be publicly rejected, with journalist João Erthal considering that the group had 'killed' the June protests not only due to its violent tactics (which led to the death of a cameraman), but because of its radical anti-media, anti-police, and anti-government agenda (Erthal, 2014). Similarly, the government reaction, condemning police repression, led the conservative media and opposition figures to moderate its initial stance towards the protests from being violent actions by disenfranchised youths, to legitimate expressions of civil discontent against the political system (Fonseca, 2013).

In this regard, two main conclusions can be drawn from the centripetal model of government response observed in the Brazil case. First, the government was successful in moderating and neutralizing the overall mobilizations. By negotiating the boundary between protesters and government, the latter managed to reduce the space for polarization – and the capacity of opposition expansion – while increasing the space for excluding radicals and non-collaborative sectors. Second, this response led to the fragmentation of social contention into smaller groups and themes. With the President putting forward the possibility of political reform, moving actively against corruption within her own administration, and adopting visible measures to deal with health,

education, and transportation problems, the government neutralized the most urgent demands capable of providing a unifying master frame to already quite disarticulated mobilizations. Thus, while it would appear that the level of contentious movements in Brazil has increased since – with large strikes by teachers, new actions by the MPL, clashes with the police on Independence Day, actions by Black Bloc groupings, and even a movement against the 2014 World Cup (BBC, 2013c; Folha, 2014) – none of them has yet rallied the numbers of the June 2013 events. The government thus managed to retain its capacity to negotiate civil demands in a more organized manner without (for the moment) altering the existing balance of forces in Brazilian party politics. Hence, if a relevant political reform takes places because of these events, it will likely be a lengthy process, administered by the ruling party, and involving substantial political bargaining with other opposition and institutionalized groups.

Conclusion

The contrasting experiences of Argentina and Brazil in responding to protest in 2012-13 illustrate two new dynamic models of protest, government response and democratic politics. In both cases, the governments were confronted with popular mobilization characteristic of the contemporary era, featuring rapid, broad-based and horizontal mobilization facilitated by social media and putting forward a diverse array of objectives including addressing corruption, rising living costs and inadequate public services. However, while the Argentine response was characterized by centrifugal dynamics, the Brazilian response was centripetal.

In the Argentine case, an oppositional approach to counterframing was adopted by the government, which drew a rigid boundary between itself and the protesters, characterizing the differences between them along multiple cleavages

such as majority/minority, popular/unpopular, mass/elite, and left/right. The result was polarization of Argentine political life between the government and its opponents. Previously diffuse and marginalized elements of the opposition were presented with an opportunity to develop both a common agenda and formal alliances, as the differences among them became less evident than those between them and the government. The opposition came to occupy the centre-ground and acquired significant electoral success, contributing potentially towards the strengthening of representative democracy through more competitive party politics.

In the Brazilian case, by contrast, the government adopted a strategy of negotiating rather than activating boundaries in its approach to responding to the protests. The government and the protesters were identified as sharing common causes, and proposals were put forward for a national pact to be approved by plebiscite and new multi-sectoral participatory institutions. Confronted with the government's inclusive strategy, the opportunity for opposition groups to form common positions was limited, and the government rather than the opposition was able to occupy the centre-ground and to claim to be promoting participatory and deliberative forms of democracy.

Although there were significant similarities between the contexts for the operation of the contrasting centrifugal and centripetal dynamics in these cases, such as the targeting of 'social movements' governments' by diffuse horizontal protests, there were significant differences between the cases that may contribute towards understanding why the different dynamics operated in each case. These differences relate to characteristics of both the governments and the protests. Operation of centrifugal dynamics in Argentina took place in the context of (i) an

exclusive political culture by which the government aimed to eliminate the centre-ground; and (ii) an extensive protest tradition. Operation of centripetal dynamics in Brazil, by contrast, took place in the context of (i) an inclusive political culture by which the Workers' Party had developed a multi-sectoral and participatory approach to government; and (ii) a limited protest tradition. It is also worth noting that whereas there were some significant violent components in the Brazilian protests, there were not in the Argentine case, which provided an opportunity for the Brazilian government to distinguish between legitimate protesters with whom it could make common cause and illegitimate protesters with whom it could not – an opportunity which was not present in the Argentine case.

A further significant difference between the cases relates to the consistency of approach of the two governments. In the Argentine case, a change of approach was evident after the 18-A, with a moderation of oppositional stances and some efforts towards boundary negotiation evident in statements welcoming the protests. In Brazil, by contrast, the government's response towards the protests remained consistently focused on boundary negotiation. This may indicate that an approach to government response to protest centered upon boundary negotiation may have been perceived to be more successful than one based on boundary distinction.

This article has used the cases of the Argentine and Brazilian governments' responses to protest in 2012-13 for the purpose of theory development in the creation of two dynamic models of government response to protest and democratic politics. We suggest that despite the particularities of the Argentine and Brazilian contexts, the centripetal and centrifugal models may be of wider applicability to other cases. A possibility for further research opened up by this

article is testing these models in other contexts, and considering further the extent to which a government strategy based on boundary negotiation may be more successful than an oppositional approach. Through analysis of a large number of similar cases, it may also be possible to draw firmer conclusions with respect to the factors that may be responsible for the onset of each of these patterns of interaction between protest, government response, and democracy, as well as the factors responsible for successful and unsuccessful application of different government strategies. Detailed exploration of the wide range of economic, political and social factors that may have an impact on the operation of the two models merits further investigation.

While it might be suggested that the participatory approach to democratic governance seen in Brazil over the last decade is significantly different from that in other countries, we suggest that democratic governments of all forms have the option of confronting protest with an approach based on boundary negotiation that may have the potential for subsequent centripetal dynamics by which the government may capture the centre-ground, strengthen its position in relation to the opposition, and through having negotiated with the protesters enhance deliberative aspects of democracy.

Another potential avenue for further investigation is to consider how centripetal and centrifugal dynamics of government response to protest may also operate beyond the context of established democracies. It would be interesting to test the proposition that, in contrast to the democratic context of the contemporary Argentine and Brazilian cases by which a strategy centered around boundary negotiation appears to have been more successful than one based on boundary distinction, in authoritarian regimes an oppositional strategy featuring

limited compromise such as in contemporary China may be more successful in facilitating regime continuity than one based upon boundary negotiation such as that adopted in the Soviet bloc in the 1980s.

It is hoped that through its development of centripetal and centrifugal models this article has opened up new avenues for taking forward a dynamic approach to understanding the interactions of protest movements, governments and democratic politics. Rather than a static approach considering political opportunity structures simply as 'open' or 'closed', this article has disaggregated different ways by which governments shape understandings of protests and the subsequent implications for both governments and their opponents. While it has been common to suggest in general terms that protest and democracy are interrelated, the models put forward in this article provide novel and dynamic means towards understanding this relationship.

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