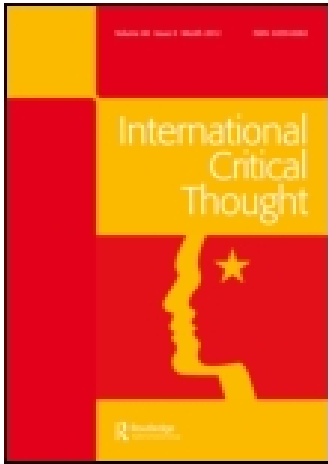


This article was downloaded by: [190.55.123.52]

On: 29 August 2014, At: 08:05

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



International Critical Thought

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/riect20>

The Roots of Conflict between Private Media and Left-Wing Governments in Latin America: The Brazilian Case

Ariel Alejandro Goldstein^a

^a Institute of Latin-American and Caribbean Studies (IEALC), University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Buenos Aires, Argentina
Published online: 27 Aug 2014.

To cite this article: Ariel Alejandro Goldstein (2014) The Roots of Conflict between Private Media and Left-Wing Governments in Latin America: The Brazilian Case, *International Critical Thought*, 4:3, 343-353, DOI: [10.1080/21598282.2014.931013](https://doi.org/10.1080/21598282.2014.931013)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21598282.2014.931013>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

The Roots of Conflict between Private Media and Left-Wing Governments in Latin America: The Brazilian Case

Ariel Alejandro Goldstein*

Institute of Latin-American and Caribbean Studies (IEALC), University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Buenos Aires, Argentina

In recent years, the accession to government by new left-wing political forces in Latin America has led to the emergence of conflicts between the policies enunciated by the presidencies and important private media groups which, in many cases, have given sustained coverage adverse to these governments. Focusing on the case of Brazil, in this paper we approach the roots of this conflict, which have manifested themselves in several countries in the region and to a great extent concern the public agenda of Latin American countries.

Keywords: media; Latin America; governments; Brazil; Lula

1. Introduction: The Debate on the New Governments

The turn of the twenty-first century in Latin America was marked by an ascent to power of different left-wing political forces with some “progressive” characteristics in common. These experiences have sparked an intense debate amongst scholars of Latin America, who characterize them in various ways. Two approaches have thrived in order to define the governments in this new period (Toer et al. 2012). One school of thought consists of those authors who point to the existence of “two lefts”: one “democratic” and “pluralist,” with constituted parties and tied to “free market” economic policies, represented by the governments of Brazil and Uruguay. The other left, described as “populist” and as standing in tension with democratic principles, may be said to have found its expression in the governments of Ecuador, Venezuela and Bolivia (Paramio 2006; Petkoff 2005).¹ From a critical perspective towards this school of thought, in recent years some authors have begun to highlight the singularity of each of these political processes in view of their particular socio-historical conditions, as well as to point out the mistake involved in reducing them to dichotomous categories (Ellner 2013a; Young 2013; French 2009; Ramírez Gallegos 2006; García 2008; Toer et al. 2012).² Authors such as Marco Aurélio

*Email: arielgoldstein@hotmail.com

¹The Argentinian case has been variously described depending on the author. Even if authors like Paramio (2006) have situated this case on the axis of the “populist” governments of Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia, probably the most fitting assessment comes from Laclau (2006), who claims that Argentinian Kirchnerism contains both populist and institutionalist elements, making it a hybrid in this classification normally based on the existence of the two lefts.

²I argue that one of the obstacles to characterizing the current “political cycle” (Ramírez Gallegos 2006) of popular governments in the region (Aboy Carlés 2013) is due to the difficulty in linking the particularities that differentiate each of these processes with a broad category which can appropriately refer to all of them. To reduce uncertainty, with a pretension not without political consequences, some have chosen to classify

García (2008) have remarked that in spite of the multiplicity of histories which have led governments to these political forces—as may be historically differentiated in the cases of the Andean countries of Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador, with low industrialization and a landed bourgeoisie, and in the southernmost countries like Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, with constituted national bourgeoisies and industrialization processes—it is not a matter of good and bad lefts, but of a convergence process at the regional level which in political terms reinvigorates its unity as a joint intervention strategy before foreign powers in a multipolar world (Toer et al. 2012).

Beyond the interpretations of these phenomena claimed by various authors, a common feature uniting these experiences has been the emergence of conflict between the governments and private media groups. In this respect, one important innovation characteristic of this cycle has lain in these governments approaching private media groups as political adversaries, intending to distort their traditional role as neutral mediators before society. As Becerra notes in this regard:

By increasing direct communication by the governments of the region, an appeal is made to the citizenship by means of speeches of a public nature which, unlike what used to happen a decade ago, contain explicit ideological references. In some cases, these speeches place major media groups dichotomously on an axis adverse to the common interest, thus seeking to distort the traditional mediation role exercised by the media. (Becerra 2012; originally in Spanish)

This article aims to reflect upon the roots of this political conflict in Latin America, focusing particularly on the Brazilian experience during the Lula era, which bears both similarities and differences with respect to other cases in the region. First, I will make an approximation to what I call the “roots of the conflict” between left-wing governments and private media groups. Next, I will outline the particularities of the Brazilian case, resuming in the conclusion the reflection on the roots of the rise of this conflict in the region.

2. The Roots of Conflict: Left-Wing Governments and Private Media Groups

Since the rise to power of new progressive governments in the last decade in Latin America, a political struggle has begun to develop in these societies’ political narratives about the true meaning of collective actions, the model of legitimate society and its organization, the legitimate holders of authority, the purposes at which the community should aim and the means to achieve them (Ansart 1983).

As noted above, governments have started to view private media groups as political adversaries, a significant shift away from their traditional role as neutral mediators before society. Consequently, we can expect that once the “Pandora’s box” concerning the origins of power of enunciation and informative coverage is opened, this debate will possibly remain in the region, as well as the initiatives to reform media systems.

The politicization of the public sphere produced by these debates is democratizing on the one hand, proposing from the presidencies a social reflection about the origins of information, the uses of language and the position of addressees in relation with their economic interests; but on the other hand, this process takes the risk of limiting the autonomy of the journalistic field with their own values and routines, reducing this profession to the adoption of conjuncture-specific political positions in polarized political systems.

these experiences in two leftist groups. This tension, moreover, between general grouping categories and experiences of a particular type, characteristic of the social sciences as a whole, is precisely what is expressed in the dissimilar categorizations that different authors have used to define this political cycle, such as “post-neoliberal” (Sader 2009), “progressive” (Zibechi 2005), among others.

The polarization generated during these political processes often has an impact on the professional performance of journalists, as critical expressions or opinions may be perceived by governments as taking a position on the other side of the “trenches,” concealing “destabilizing” “coup-monger” pretensions behind a “freedom of speech” and professional independence discourse. However, it should be clear in this regard that the political and social polarization that occurs during these processes is not generally a goal deliberately intended by government actors, but it arises as a result of the power struggle that pits these governments against different economic-corporate powers, usually entrenched in the old elites of these societies (Ellner 2013b).

In Latin America, the big private media groups have historically acted as power factors in the public sphere of these societies, where there has been a strong overlap between the state and the dominant groups, as part of a “patrimonialist” culture of low regulation (Waisbord 2013).

The coming into office of governments—according to their self-identification, being on the left wing of the political and ideological spectrum—that aspire to produce significant political transformations (Conaghan and De la Torre 2008) involving a discourse affecting the interests of the so-called “power factors” ended up creating new tensions with private media groups; the latter also being associated in government rhetoric as part of the “corporations.” This is an interactive conflict, where the perception of hostile coverage by governments at certain times generates the delineation of a political boundary (Aboy Carlés 2001), pointing to the media as adversaries, which in turn reinforces the adverse coverage of large private groups. However, also part of this conflict, as already mentioned, is an element that is not commonly perceived by current governments, which practice an economic reductionism (Waisbord 2013) of these disputes, referring to reporters sometimes as subservient to their editors or media owners, thereby ignoring the specificity of their professional routines and values (Porto 2012). In this context, some authors like Follari (2013) and Laclau (2012) tend to equate the opposing political parties to the private media groups in terms of their performance in the public sphere, suggesting the substitution of the latter in the absence of the first. This assessment is based on an uncritical allegiance to the socio-political divisions formulated by presidential speeches which, based on their involvement in the political struggle for the constitution of identities, equate private media groups and the opposing parties, even pointing to the former as representing the “true” opposition party.³ However, we believe that an analysis that aims at a more widespread understanding of the roots of this conflict should look at presidential speeches and the cleavages—assuming positions in a field of differentiated relations as is the political field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995)—that they propose at greater depth. Thus, we argue that the specific contexts are what define the proximity or political-ideological rift between these spaces.

Another distinguishing feature that serves as an explanatory factor of this growing conflict—especially in Argentina during the presidencies of Cristina Kirchner, Venezuela during the presidencies of Hugo Chavez, and Ecuador during the presidencies of Rafael Correa—is that these governments, claiming to provide a response to the existing conflict, have passed laws which aim at a deeper regulation and a reform of the media system.⁴ The correlation of forces in each country in terms of the influence of private media groups in the public sphere

³By way of example, in a recent interview Ecuadorean president Rafael Correa referred to the “terrible opponent faced by the progressive governments in Latin America: the media companies that take the place of right-wing parties in decline, blatantly make politics and try to destabilize and conspire on a daily basis” (Sader 2013a; originally in Portuguese).

⁴In the last two cases of Venezuela and Ecuador, unlike the case of Argentina, the area of application of these laws is not only the concentration of media ownership, but the production of contents thereof. As Waisbord (2013) states: “the Resorte Law deserves special attention because it was a key legislative tool of Chavez’s to produce profound changes in media content. This was not a law designed to transform ownership structures

and its links with political power in view of its veto power against regulation, as well as electoral legitimacy that translates into political capital and provides margins of autonomy to the actions of governments, are all aspects that determine whether reforms in the media system may occur.

Another common feature of Latin American presidents, which are part of this “left turn,” is the establishment, before the perception of an adverse coverage by private media groups, of a more direct communication with their audiences in order to counteract the mediations produced by traditional media (Lima 2006; Porto 2012; Kitzberger 2010; Conaghan and De la Torre 2008). Based on this communication strategy of the presidencies to construct alternative communication channels to the traditional forms dominated by the private media, various programs have been created such as *Café com o Presidente* (Coffee with the President) in Brazil, *Aló Presidente* (Hello President) in Venezuela, *Enlace Ciudadano* (Citizens Outreach) in Ecuador and a recent interview series launched by Argentinean president Cristina Kirchner, entitled *Desde Otro Lugar* (From Another Place).

The Brazilian case enjoys some exceptionality considering the left-wing governments in the region because of the higher “professionalization” in its journalism, especially in the Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo axis, and because of the greater autonomy of the media system from political power. Authors like Waisbord (2013), Porto (2012) and Albuquerque and Roxo da Silva (2009) have noted the features of this process of gradual professionalization starting in the 1950s with the creation of factual-based journalism, leaving behind its traditional literary orientation. As journalist Neumann Pinto stated, in this process of modernization, the newspaper *Última Hora* (Last Hour), run by journalist Samuel Wainer, was a pioneer.⁵ Later, during the democratic transition, determining the editorial line of *Folha de S. Paulo* (Sheet of Sao Paulo) as an independent newspaper also meant a reform towards greater autonomy and professionalization of its journalism as regarding the political class (Pilagallo 2012).

To this we can add the “opening” of the *Globo* organizations, produced during the Brazilian re-democratization towards greater autonomy of political power (Porto 2012), which affected the rest of the media system, but which in turn defines a scenario characterized by the great political influence of this communication conglomerate in the public sphere.

Some analysts like Waisbord (2013) argue that the Brazilian case falls under a moderate group of the leftist governments in the region, in contrast with the countries that experience conflict with private media groups, as would happen in the cases of the “populist lefts.” However, the purpose of this analysis is to relocate the Brazilian case, beyond its particular characteristics, within a framework of analysis of the unfolding conflict between left-wing governments and private media groups in Latin America.

3. The Brazilian Case: Media and Politics during Lula da Silva’s Presidencies

There is an oligopoly situation in the media produced by the military dictatorship, which involves a dense network of relationships with regional political elites in Brazil (Rubim and Colling 2006; Lima 2006). At the same time, a few family groups hold cross-ownership of major newspapers, magazines and television stations, which represents a reduction of diversity in the confrontation of opinions and a narrowing of the public debate (Azevedo 2008). Rovai asserts that:

and the political economy of the industry, such as ‘media law’ in Argentina, but to regulate audiovisual media outlets” (Waisbord 2013, 64; originally in Spanish).

⁵My interview with *O Estado de S. Paulo* leader-writer José Neumann Pinto, Sao Paulo, March 20, 2014.

Editora Abril (Publishing Abril), the Globo organizations and the group O Estado de S. Paulo (The State of Sao Paulo), in conjunction with the Folha da Manhã (Sheet of the Morning) Group—which also holds a controlling interest in the largest internet provider in the country, Universo On Line (On Line Universe) (UOL)—these four media organizations have set the journalistic agenda mainly politically at least since the redemocratization of the country.

That does not relate only to the actual influence that their media exert, but mainly to the fact that these four conglomerates, even though they compete, repeated the news from each other. (Rovai 2007, 117–18; originally in Portuguese)

The great Brazilian press, directed at the elites, the urban middle class (Fonseca 2005) and opinion makers, circulates especially in the Rio de Janeiro–Sao Paulo axis, unlike the massive national audience enjoyed by television in the media system (Azevedo 2006). As noted by Azevedo:

Directed at the elite and opinion-makers, these newspapers offset their low penetration into the popular classes with a large capacity to set agendas, format issues and influence perceptions and behaviors at both the political-governmental and the general public levels, this latter through opinion leaders or through the impact of online newspapers on broadcast television. (Azevedo 2006, 29; originally in Portuguese)

During the Brazilian dictatorship (1964–85), complicity of the most important media groups with the military regime enabled a capitalization of the former and their acquisition of dominant positions in the media market (Pilagallo 2012). *Grupo Globo* (Globo Group), *Grupo Abril* (Abril Group) and *Grupo Folha* (Folha Group) are cases in point.

The Brazilian dictatorship and then Sarney's presidency (1985–90) were contexts that produced the consolidation of a favor-exchanging system between regional political elites and central power, mainly coordinated by the minister of communications Antonio Carlos Magalhaes providing broadcasting licenses to regional elites in exchange for political support of Sarney in order to ensure a presidential system and a five-year term (Porto 2012), resulting in what became known as “electronic *coronelismo*” (Lima 2006).

As Porto explains:

The new republic consolidated a new structure of political power, a system of “electronic clientelism” based on state oligarchies and their local media empires. Several of the major political actors of the Brazilian transition to democracy were active participants in this new power scheme, including Sarney himself. (Porto 2012)

Tensions between the Workers Party (PT) and the most important media began at the end of the dictatorship, with the emergence of Lula as a unionist and political leader. Contrary to expectation, when Lula's leadership emerged as part of a new trade unionism that was brewing in the industrial ABC region of Sao Paulo in the strikes of 1978 against the dictatorship, the press construed his appearance as that of a conciliatory leader and he got complimentary treatment for this (Paraná 2010).

Since the official founding of the PT in the 1980s, a major rejection of Lula's transition from the unions to the political arena began to emerge in certain media,⁶ becoming clear during the presidential campaign of 1989. The preference of the *Rede Globo* (Globo Network) was made explicit in the debate during the second round of the elections in 1989, which was edited in the subsequent airing of the leading newscast of Brazil, *Jornal Nacional* (National Newspaper),

⁶Interview with Ricardo Kotscho, Press Secretary to Lula in his first term, March 27, 2012, Sao Paulo.

presenting a bias in selection and timing of the interventions in favor of Collor de Mello (Pilgallo 2012; Porto 2012).

Since Lula took office as president in January 2003, some political tensions developed with the traditional media relating to his role as popular communicator (Werneck 2012), which tended to counteract the unidirectional logic of the traditional media (Lima 2006).

At the beginning of Lula's term, it may be noted that both *O Estado de S. Paulo* and *Folha de S. Paulo*, the latter from a more critical perspective, adopted a position of certain expectation with the government, in keeping with the first 100 days of margin usually provided by the press to governments to decide on an editorial line in connection with their policies (Pilgallo 2012), as well as with the promises of moderation made by Lula during the 2002 presidential campaign and the making of conservative reforms.

However, in the course of the term they moved from this ambiguity towards a critical stance (Rubim and Colling 2006) despite the aforementioned initial expectation from the media towards the PT candidate in 2002, which was maintained in the first months of Lula's first term. The emergence of the scandal of the *mensalão* in May 2005 brought about the installation of a "media siege" (Singer 2009), which meant the public agenda would revolve around the issue of corruption.

The political crisis of the *mensalão* arose from the tensions that occurred within the heterogeneous alliance that the PT had forged at a parliamentary level to ensure "governability" (*Partido Liberal* [Liberal Party], *Partido Popular Socialista* [Socialist People's Party], *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro* [Brazilian Labour Party] and *Partido Democrático Trabalhista* [Democratic Labour Party]). In May 2005, *Veja* (See) magazine published the transcript of a video where Deputy Roberto Jefferson of the Brazilian Labour Party (PTB) was accused of diverting funds in the public postal company.

The then congressman, who knew he would not receive support from the Planalto (Pilgallo 2012), decided then to make a series of allegations that were to have an explosive effect. In an interview with the *Folha de S. Paulo* on June 6, he accused the PT of paying a monthly fee (*mensualidade*) to their allied parliamentarians in exchange for support to Lula's government in Congress. The shock produced by the disclosure of these scandals in public opinion generated a significant erosion of the government's political capital, an increase in polarization between the government and the opposition, as well as the opening of several Parliamentary Commissions of Inquiry (CPI) charged with investigating the events in the Congress (Goldstein 2013).

In these circumstances, Lula decided to surround himself with social movements as an alternative to communicating with the electorate during this political crisis (Secco 2011). Faced with the deterioration of this crisis and the difficulties to disclose an alternative agenda by the government because of the "media siege," Lula would reinforce his appearances with organizations and social movements in political acts in different parts of the country in an attempt to consolidate support, which would allow him to overcome these difficulties. As Secco described:

In those days of storm, its agenda was directed toward popular acts. Lula wasn't talking with the press but was participating in events with the *Movimento dos Sem Terra* (Landless Movement) and the *Central Unica de Trabalhadores* (Unique Workers Central), went to the Union of the ABC metal workers and established a personal and direct contact with the people of the interior of the Northeast, as if attempting to stop a threat of radicalization and Chavismo in the event of an impeachment against him. In fact, Hugo Chávez visited him in those difficult days. (Secco 2011, 228; originally in Portuguese)

The political crisis of the *mensalão* initiated in May 2005 meant a time of greater tension during the two governments of Lula in the relations between the government and the private media groups. This context involved the beginning of a scenario of conflict that changed the relationship

between the government of the PT and the media, which assumed a prominent place. From there, according to Rubim and Colling (2006), the media sought to virtually cut the term short and have anticipated elections to mark the end of a government that was always perceived as strange by the traditional elites of the country (Rubim and Colling 2006). Media coverage during the political crisis of 2005–6 focused on a search for journalistic scandal and the reduction of politics to a moralizing dimension (Rubim and Colling 2006). In turn, Venício Lima (2006) analyzes that from May 2005 until the 2006 elections the Brazilian media practiced a journalism of innuendo and aligned themselves with the opposition parties in a campaign to reduce President Lula's chances of re-election and to anticipate the end of his first term. For this author, who analyzed the coverage of the political crisis of 2005–6 carried out by large newspapers, the media adopted a position of "presumption of guilt" (Lima 2006).

In this context, as we have recently studied, a dominant framework shared by the newspapers *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Estado de S. Paulo* to characterize Lula's leadership during this political crisis was to consider it "havía populism," in order to reduce his public appearances, where public speeches were made with an affinity toward social movements (Goldstein 2013).

According to Porto, during his first term:

While Lula avoided collective press conferences and individual interviews with journalists, he built a news management strategy heavily centered on public speaking. Lula relied on his oratory skills and his ability to communicate with ordinary citizens to gain access to the news media and to reach the public. The president often took the opportunity presented by public events to address the audience with speeches, often improvising instead of reading a text that had been prepared by his advisors. These speeches frequently printed or broadcast by the media allowed the president to communicate with the public without the mediation of journalists and without the need to answer difficult questions. (Porto 2012, 186)

In summary, two factors help explain why Lula refused to interact with journalists in a more systematic and institutionalized way. First, the president's personal views about news organizations played an important role. Lula believed that media owners controlled the newsrooms and that they opposed him, preventing the coverage of positive news about his administration. Second, disagreements in the president's team and the predominance of a confrontational news management strategy also negatively affected the president's relationship with the press. (Porto 2012, 193)

Lula's victory in the 2006 elections by a significant margin in the runoff against the candidate of the Social Democratic Brazilian Party (PSDB) Geraldo Alckmin resolved this critical juncture for the government, resulting in a situation where the president could transform his electoral capital into important political capital.⁷ The consolidation of his popularity afforded Lula more autonomy during his second term to sketch initiatives of governmental activism in the media sphere (Kitzberger 2012) that could conflict with the expectations of the media system's key actors. In this more favorable scenario, during his second term, Lula appointed Franklin Martins as the Secretariat of

⁷In this context, despite accusations against the government, Sader (2013b, 140) states that: "Investment in social policies began to generate results, changing the government's fundamental basis of social support to the poorest and most overlooked regions of the country. Faced with the possibility that Lula would trigger a big popular mobilization in defense of the government and of his office, the opposition receded and pulled out all stops on the chance of bleeding the government's resources in Congress and defeating him in the 2006 elections. But the effects of social policies allowed Lula to be reelected, consolidating a new kind of government support, parallel to the recovery of growth. This trend had to do directly with the change of the government's economic team and their general priorities, who abandoned the conservative orientation of economic policy, replacing it with a model of development that structurally articulated economic growth with income distribution policies" (originally in Portuguese).

Social Communication (SECOM), who produced a preliminary draft reform of the media system, which would fall on the next government to assess.⁸ However, this project was not resumed at the outset of Dilma Rousseff's subsequent government, and more regulation initiatives were postponed, an action relating to the appointment of politicians with the Democratic Brazilian Movement Party (PMDB) as heads of the Ministry of Communications (Kitzberger 2012).

Despite the continuity of its policy of "unstable balance" as a whole, Dilma Rousseff's term may be characterized by certain differences regarding the relation it wove with the communication media. From the outset, Rousseff demonstrated a willingness to establish a greater approximation between the government's agenda and that set by the main mass media by demanding officials and ministers in her government team who were tainted by corruption accusations from certain press media to step down.⁹ Just like the president intended to define her term based on a greater emphasis on institutional matters, her "republican" stance with respect to the leading communication media was a part of this mark that she wished to make. As a result, when the *mensalão* reached the Supremo Tribunal Federal (Federal Supreme Court, STF) during 2012, which generated harsh criticism by intellectuals and PT activists for her "moralization" and involvement in the municipal elections campaign, it did not obtain public statements from the president, who considered the judicial power should try the case and that no "interference" should be made from the presidential office.

Since she did not possess Lula's foundational charisma and because she insinuated a line of greater conciliation and less confrontation with the communication media, Dilma Rousseff's presidential decisions generated tensions within the PT, which boasts a history of significant reindications touching the "democratization of the media." Unlike Lula, who during the 2006 and 2011 campaigns established a political boundary, targeting certain media as adversaries, Rousseff showed a greater willingness to achieve a balance of power free of tension with these sectors. It may be understood how the "republicanism" characterizing the vision of the current president has added a greater obstacle to regulation demands.¹⁰

We can observe with this reconstruction that, once a new balance had been reached in 2006 inherent to a highly popular presidential leadership—apart from some limited initiatives and the episodic definition of the private media groups as political opponents in presidential speeches the Brazilian government during the presidencies of Lula chose a solution of coexistence that meant postponing the "threat" of regulating the media system¹¹ in exchange for a less critical coverage of the government.¹²

⁸See "Franklin defende agência reguladora para a mídia," a notice in the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, p.19, about Franklin Martins, the Secretariat of Social Communication of the Brazilian government, and his proposals on media regulation, on October 8, 2010.

⁹This initiative meant that several officials facing corruption charges would be stepping down: Minister of Agriculture Wagner Rossi, leader of the PMDB, who came after the Chief of Staff Antonio Palocci (PT) and the Minister for Transport Alfredo Nascimento (PR). Decisions generated tension within the governing coalition, especially in connection with the PT-PMDB alliances, where Vice President Michel Temer and a significant number of representatives and senators belong.

¹⁰During the June 2013 demonstrations, which shook Brazilian politics, some conservative press media like *O Estado de S. Paulo* went from initial criticism, as they denounced the disturbance of public order posed by the demonstrators, to the reinvocation of these demonstrations, as they then understood that if they were redefined in a conservative fashion, they could affect the government's political capital, as they indeed did.

¹¹As Kitzberger (2012, 13) puts it in a recent article: "a limit lay in the communicative power of big media actors, especially in their ability to affect the relationship of the government with the public and society. Any attempt to put any kind of regulation of the sector under discussion—predictably—meant a declaration of war with the actors who dominated the media field" (originally in Spanish).

¹²In Venezuela, the important role played by the private media groups in the coup against President Hugo Chavez in 2002, which produced a watershed in Venezuelan politics and led to the enactment of the law

4. Conclusion

As we have seen in this paper, the Brazilian case is a relevant example regarding this conflict between private media groups and the new governments, which are developed within the framework of this new political cycle. Unlike authors who tend to place the analysis of the Brazilian case out of this dynamic of conflict between leftist governments and private media groups, which would be limited to the cases of the aforementioned “populist governments,” this analysis seeks to analyze Brazil in the context of the conflict between leftist governments and private media groups in the region without ignoring specific properties that characterize the Brazilian case.

Thus, it is clear that, unlike the case of other Latin American countries such as Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela—where the conflict between governments and the private media groups has resulted in the adoption of new legislation with the purpose of reforming the media system—the Brazilian case, beyond the episodic definitions of President Lula of these clusters as political opponents, reflects a particular situation in which the influence of the private media groups, along with regional political elites, has not allowed a regulation, but an unaltered “balance in tension.”

The linkage formed during the dictatorship and the new republic between the interests of the regional political elites and broadcasting licensing by what has been called “electronic *coronelismo*” (Lima 2006) constitutes a serious obstacle to altering the status quo in the Brazilian case.

As we have seen, while in other cases such as Argentina, Venezuela and Ecuador, the targeting of the media as political adversaries meant gradually embarking on a process of intense political conflict resulting in the adoption of new legislation, the Brazilian Government has chosen in this context to postpone “threats” of reform of the system (Waisbord 2013) in exchange for less confrontational coverage by the mainstream media.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Tecnológicas (CONICET) of Argentina. I am deeply grateful for the feedback provided by Professor Mario Toer and the two anonymous reviewers of this journal.

Notes on Contributor

Ariel Goldstein is a master in Political Science at the Institute of High Social Studies, University of San Martín. He also is CONICET doctoral fellow at the Institute of Studies of Latin America and Caribbean at the University of Buenos Aires. His main field of research is media and politics in contemporary Latin America and specifically the Brazilian case. Recent publications include “From ‘Realism or Isolation’ to a ‘Bolivarian Diplomacy’: Brazilian Foreign Policy in *O Estado de S. Paulo* during Lula da Silva’s First Rule” (2013) in *Reflexión Política* and *From Expectative to Confrontation: O Estado de S. Paulo during Lula da Silva’s First Rule*, Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores para la Comunicación de América Latina (forthcoming).

References

- Aboy Carlés, G. 2001. *Las dos fronteras de la democracia argentina. La reformulación de las identidades políticas de Alfonsín a Menem* [The two borders of Argentine democracy: The reformulation of the political identities from Alfonsín to Menem]. Rosario: Homo Sapiens.
- Aboy Carlés, G. 2013. “Persistencias del populismo” [Persistence of populism]. Paper presented at VII Congreso Latinoamericano de Ciencia Política, organized by Asociación Latinoamericana de Ciencia

RESORTE, and in Argentina, where the conflict between the Argentine government and the agricultural entities produced a scenario of polarization which later led to the adoption of a new Law on Audiovisual Communication Services, showed moments where the rise in the conflict between the government and mainstream media groups led to governments claiming to exercise reforms in media systems.

- Política (ALACIP) [7th Latin American Congress of Political Science, organized by Association of Latin American Political Science], Bogotá, September 25–27, 2013.
- Albuquerque, A., and M. Roxo da Silva. 2009. “Skilled, Loyal and Disciplined: Communist Journalists and the Adaptation of the American Model of ‘Independent Journalism’ in Brazil.” *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 14 (3): 376–95.
- Ansart, P. 1983. *Ideología, conflictos y poder* [Ideology, conflicts and power]. Puebla: Premia.
- Azevedo, F. 2006. “Democracia e mídia no Brasil: um balanço dos anos recentes” [Democracy and media in Brazil: An assessment of recent years]. In *Mídia e democracia* [Media and democracy], edited by J. Goulart, 23–47. Annablume: San Pablo.
- Azevedo, F. 2008. “Imprensa, Partido dos Trabalhadores e eleições presidenciais (1989–2006)” [Press, workers party and presidential elections (1989–2006)]. Paper presented at the 17th Conference of the National Association of Graduate Programs in Communication (Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, COMPOS), San Pablo, June 3–6, 2008.
- Becerra, M. 2012. “Terremoto mediático en América Latina” [Media earthquake in Latin America]. *Le Monde Diplomatique* [Diplomatic world], no. 152 (February). <http://www.eldiplo.org/index.php/archivo/152-la-guerra-por-otros-medios/terremoto-mediatico-en-america-latina/>.
- Bourdieu, P., and L. Wacquant. 1995. “*Habitus, illusio y racionalidad*” [Habitus, rationality and illusio]. In *Respuestas por una antropología reflexiva* [Answers for a reflexive anthropology], by P. Bourdieu and L. Wacquant, 79–97. México: Grijalbo.
- Conaghan, C., and C. De la Torre. 2008. “The Permanent Campaign of Rafael Correa: Making Ecuador’s Plebiscitary Presidency.” *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 13 (3): 267–84.
- Ellner, S. 2013a. “Latin America’s Radical Left in Power: Complexities and Challenges in the Twenty-First Century.” *Latin American Perspectives* 40 (3): 5–25.
- Ellner, S. 2013b. “Social and Political Diversity and the Democratic Road to Change in Venezuela.” *Latin American Perspectives* 40 (3): 63–82.
- Follari, R. 2013. “La Batalla Interminable. Neopopulismo y medios hegemónicos” [The never ending battle: Populism and hegemonic media]. *Debates y Combates* [Debates and fights], no. 5: 117–32.
- Fonseca, F. 2005. *O consenso forjado: a grande imprensa e a formação da Agenda Ultraliberal no Brasil* [The forged consensus: The mainstream press and the formation of the ultra-liberal agenda in Brazil]. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec.
- French, J. D. 2009. “Understanding the Politics of Latin America’s Plural Lefts (Chavez/Lula): Social Democracy, Populism and Convergence on the Path to a Post-Neoliberal World.” *Third World Quarterly* 30 (2): 349–70.
- García, M. A. 2008. “Nuevos gobiernos en América del Sur: Del destino a la construcción de un futuro” [New governments in South America: From a destiny to the construction of a future]. *Nueva Sociedad* [New society], no. 217: 118–26.
- Goldstein, A. 2013. “De la expectativa a la confrontación: O Estado de S. Paulo durante el primer gobierno de Lula da Silva” [From expectative to confrontation: O Estado de S. Paulo during Lula da Silva’s first rule]. Thesis, Institute of High Social Studies, University of San Martin.
- Kitzberger, P. 2010. “Giro a la izquierda, populismo y activismo gubernamental en la esfera pública mediática en América Latina” [Left turn, populism and governmental activism in the media public sphere in Latin America]. In *Poder político y medios de comunicación: de la representación política al reality show* [Political power and media: From political representation to the reality show], edited by B. Sorj, 59–98. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.
- Kitzberger, P. 2012. “La política de medios en las presidencias de Luis Inácio Lula da Silva: entre las demandas de democratización y los imperativos de gobernabilidad” [The media policy in the presidencies of Luis Inacio Lula da Silva: Between the demands of democratization and the imperatives of governance]. *Desarrollo Económico* [Economic development] 52 (205): 463–90.
- Laclau, E. 2006. “La deriva populista y la centroizquierda latinoamericana” [Populist drift and Latin American center left]. *Nueva Sociedad* [New society], no. 205: 56–61.
- Laclau, E. 2012. “Los medios se han transformado en el principal partido opositor” [The media have become the main opposition party]. *Página/12*, October 14. www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-205556-2012-10-14.html.
- Lima, V. 2006. *Mídia: crise política e poder no Brasil* [Media, political crisis and power in Brazil]. San Pablo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo.
- Paramio, L. 2006. “Giro a la izquierda y regreso del populismo” [Left turn and populism return]. *Nueva Sociedad* [New society], no. 205: 62–74.
- Paraná, D. 2010. *Lula, el hijo del Brasil* [Lula, the son of Brazil]. Buenos Aires: Editorial El Ateneo.

- Petkoff, T. 2005. "Las dos izquierdas" [The two lefts]. *Nueva Sociedad* [New society], no. 197: 114–28.
- Pilagallo, O. 2012. *Historia da imprensa paulista: jornalismo e poder de D. Pedro a Dilma* [History of the Sao Paulo press: Journalism and power from D. Pedro to Dilma]. San Pablo: Tres Estrelas.
- Porto, M. 2012. *Media Power and Democratization in Brazil: TV Globo and the Dilemmas of Political Accountability*, vol. 8. London: Routledge.
- Ramírez Gallegos, F. 2006. "Mucho más que dos izquierdas" [More than two lefts]. *Nueva Sociedad* [New society], no. 205: 30–44.
- Rovai, R. 2007. "As muitas derrotas da mídia comercial tradicional" [The many defeats of traditional commercial media]. In *A mídia nas eleições de 2006* [The media in the 2006 elections], edited by V. Lima, 115–32. San Pablo: Fundação Perseu Abramo.
- Rubim, A. A. C., and L. Colling. 2006. "Política, cultura e cobertura jornalística das eleições presidenciais de 2006" [Politics, culture and journalistic coverage in the presidential elections of 2006]. In *Mídia e democracia* [Media and democracy], edited by J. Goulart, 63–78. San Pablo: Annablume.
- Sader, E. 2009. *El nuevo Topo: Los caminos de la izquierda latinoamericana* [The new mole: Paths of Latin American Left]. Buenos Aires: CLACSO-Siglo Veintiuno Editores.
- Sader, E. 2013a. "Rafael Correa e a mudança de época" [Rafael Correa and the change of epoch]. Accessed April 14, 2014. www.cartamaior.com.br/?/Blog/Blog-do-Emir/Rafael-Correa-e-a-mudanca-de-epoca/2/29591.
- Sader, E. 2013b. "A construção da hegemonia pós-neoliberal" [The construction of the post-neoliberal hegemony]. In *10 anos de governos pós neoliberais no Brasil: Lula e Dilma* [10 years of post-neoliberal governments in Brazil: Lula and Dilma], edited by E. Sader and P. Gentili, 135–44. San Pablo: Boitempo.
- Secco, L. 2011. *Historia do PT* [History of the PT]. San Pablo: Atelié Editorial.
- Singer, A. 2009. "Raízes Sociais e Ideológicas do Lulismo" [Social and ideological roots of Lulism]. *Novos Estudos Cebrap* [New studies CEBRAP], no. 85: 83–102.
- Toer, M., P. Martínez Sameck, S. Barassi, J. Diez, F. Montero, A. Goldstein, N. Garrido, A. Burbano de Lara, N. Salerno, L. Agilda, G. Salcedo, A. Salas Oroño, and L. Melendi. 2012. *La emancipación de América Latina. Nuevas Estrategias* [The emancipation of Latin America: New strategies]. Buenos Aires, Peña Lillo: Continente.
- Waisbord, S. 2013. *Vox Populista: Medios, periodismo, democracia* [Vox Populista: Media, populism and democracy]. Buenos Aires: Gedisa.
- Werneck, P. 2012. "Cientista político André Singer explica sua tese sobre o lulismo" [Political scientist André Singer explains his thesis about lulism]. *Folha de São Paulo*, Agosto 19, Ilustríssima. Accessed April 14, 2014. www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/1139728-cientista-politico-andre-singer-explica-sua-tese-sobre-o-lulismo.shtml.
- Young, K. 2013. "The Good, the Bad, and the Benevolent Interventionist: US Press and Intellectual Distortions of the Latin American Left." *Latin American Perspectives* 40 (3): 207–25.
- Zibechi, R. 2005. "La difícil relación entre los movimientos sociales y los gobiernos progresistas" [The difficult relationship between social movements and progressive governments]. *Revista Futuros* 3 (9). Accessed April 14, 2014. www.revistafuturos.info/futuros_9/mov_zibechi1.htm.