Echoes of Militarism: Presidential Cabinets as a Tool to Mediate Coup Risk After Transitions from Bureaucratic-Authoritarian Regimes

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Abstract

After the Latin American military regimes of the 1960s and 1970s were removed from power, newly elected governments had to contend with how to transition existing political institutions into a new democratic era and how to redefine the military's role under a new political order. In this turbulent period where the risk of falling back into a cycle of authoritarian regimes at the hands of another military coup was a significant concern, presidents often had to appease potential military dissenters with limited access to political decision-making. This thesis explores whether the institution of the Presidential Cabinet was employed as a channel for military leaders to re-enter the political arena after the transitions to democracy in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. I propose a mechanism that explains how presidents can leverage the complete control they have over their Cabinet in pure presidential systems to appease military leaders when the risk of another coup is high in order to mitigate this risk. I employ linear fixed effects models on longitudinal data with originally coded military status information for each Cabinet over 30 years in each country of interest to investigate the relationship between coup risk and the proportion of Cabinet ministers with a military title to test the proposed mechanism. I also analyze the cases of Brazil and Chile to demonstrate the different manifestations of this mechanism. The results of this study suggest that while the Presidential Cabinet does have the potential to act in this proposed capacity, the relationship between coup risk and the proportion of military ministers is heavily dependent on political circumstances and could flow in either causal direction. Despite mixed findings, this investigation helps elucidate how different institutions like the Presidential Cabinet could facilitate concessions to the military that continue to affect the democratic strength of Latin America today.

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1 Introduction

The military has been central to Latin American politics since the region's main period of decolonization. While the 19th century was characterized by Caudillo rule in many Latin American countries, the start of the 20th century ushered in an era of coup cycles and repressive authoritarian leadership. From the 1900s to the 1960s, the frequency of military coups in Latin America increased every two decades.[1] There were 105 military coups over that period and authoritarian governments ruled 85% of the region by the 1970s.[2] Even after the third wave of democratization that hit most Latin American countries in the 1980s, the region continues to struggle with democratic consolidation. Today, Nicaragua suffers under the repressive dictatorship of Daniel Ortega while Peru and El Salvador were shocked by attempted presidential coups over the past three years.[3] Along with alarmingly low rates of democratic satisfaction, modern incidents of democratic backsliding and executive aggrandizement point to a greater need to understand what institutional factors remain obstacles in Latin America's journey out of its totalitarian history.[4]

One of the main reasons that many countries in Latin America continue to fall short of democratic consolidation is the strong presence of the military, even after transitions to

[1] Robert H. Dix, "Military Coups and Military Rule in Latin America," *Armed Forces & Society* 20, no. 3 (1994): 439–56, https://www.jstor.org/stable/45347010.
[2] Egil Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America," *Journal of Peace Research* 4, no. 3 (1967): 228–51, https://www.jstor.org/stable/422668; Marie Arana, "Latin Americans Are Souring on Democracy. That's Not So Surprising Considering the Region's History," Time, August 27, 2019, https://time.com/5662653/democracy-history-latin-america/.
[3] Oliver Stuenkel, "Guatemala's Farcical Elections Mirror Broad Democratic Backsliding in Central America," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 22, 2023, https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/06/22/guatemala-s-farcical-elections-mirror-broad-democratic-backsliding-in-central-america-pub-90028; Daniel Zovatto, "The Rapidly Deteriorating Quality of Democracy in Latin America," Brookings, February 28, 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-rapidly-deteriorating-quality-of-democracy-in-latin-america/.
[4] Arana, "Latin Americans Are Souring on Democracy. That's Not So Surprising Considering the Region's History."

democracy.[5] A strong indicator of successful democratic transitions is military autonomy from civilian authorities, but in Latin America, many channels keep the relationship between the military and the democratically elected government alive. One such channel is the Presidential Cabinet. Most countries in Latin America have pure presidential systems, a form of government where power is concentrated in the executive branch and where Presidential Cabinets are left largely to the chief executive's discretion. With its roles of conveying the president's priorities and connecting the executive branch with other national institutions, the Presidential Cabinet is a potential vehicle for the preservation of military power after a democratic transition.

Even though there is ample scholarship focusing on institutional factors that contribute to successful democratic consolidation, Cabinets in presidential systems are severely understudied because their makeup and jurisdiction are so strongly determined by the president's purview. I investigate whether the Presidential Cabinet has been used to prolong the influence of the military over the executive branch after the dissolution of military governments in Latin America and empirically test the relationship between military presence in Presidential Cabinets and the risk of slipping back into a military dictatorship.

In the face of a "coup trap" that has marred Latin American history with recurring, inescapable power grabs as well as concerns that the military is a big threat to both democratic and authoritarian governments in this region, the first years of the new Latin American democracies of the 1980s were full of trepidation and fear of a return to the cycle of military coups.[6] One way in

[5] Jorge Zaverucha, "The Degree of Military Political Autonomy during the Spanish, Argentine and Brazilian Transitions," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 2 (May 1993): 283–99, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X0000465X.
[6] Fabrice Lehoucq and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, "Breaking Out of the Coup Trap: Political Competition and Military Coups in Latin America," *Comparative Political Studies* 47, no. 8 (July 1, 2014): 1105–29, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013488561.

which these fears could be assuaged was to allow the military to continue influencing the new democratic government through limited political roles, as happened in the case of Brazil where military officers were given roles in the Presidential Cabinet to appease their desire for political influence after the democratic transition.[7] As a result, I expect that the proportion of military officers serving on Presidential Cabinets will decrease immediately following the removal of the military from power but remain high during a gradual decline in the years after a democratic transition because new administrations will want to appease the military in order to reduce coup risk. I also expect that the proportion of military ministers will be higher when coup risk is higher, which I measure using an index of coup risk grounded in existing scholarship.[8]

Using minister-level data from WhoGov supplemented with originally coded biographical information of each minister's military status obtained from government websites and internet searches, I created a dataset of the military composition of Presidential Cabinets in the years surrounding their democratic transition for a set of Latin American countries that had military governments with shared institutional characteristics and state-sponsored violence in the 1960s and 1970s, which includes Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Besides reporting the involvement of the military in Presidential Cabinets after different democratic transitions in Latin America, I employ a country-fixed-effects regression model to investigate the relationship between the proportion of military ministers and coup risk and evaluate the proposed mechanism, which I also explore with two case studies of Brazil and Chile.

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[7] Daniel Zirker, "The Military Ministers and Political Change in Post-Authoritarian Brazil," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes* 18, no. 35 (1993): 87–110, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41799827.
[8] Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán, "Breaking Out of the Coup Trap"; Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 5 (October 1, 2003): 594–620, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002703258197.

I find that there is an overall positive relationship between the proportion of ministers with a military rank and coup risk for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay in the time period surrounding their transition from a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime to a democratic republic. However, I do not find sufficient evidence to support the proposed mechanism that presidents will appoint military leaders to the Cabinet as a response to heightened coup risk. Through a detailed analysis of the democratic transitions in Brazil and Chile, I disentangle these mixed empirical results and reach the conclusion that the Presidential Cabinet has the potential to act in this function but is likely not the principal mechanism to conciliate the military in order to mitigate coup risk. In the face of alarming threats to democracy in Latin America today, this thesis shines a light on institutional channels that have clung onto authoritarian tendencies of the past.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Designing Cabinets in Presidential Systems

The Cabinet in the Parliamentary system of government is a key and well-studied institution. Because the Prime Minister derives their power from the legislature, which elects and has the power to dismiss the PM, they make Cabinet appointments that are favorable to Parliament and that facilitate working towards their policy goals in the legislature. In these types of systems, the Cabinet is predominantly an institutional arena of coalition-making where the winning party can use Cabinet appointments to maintain partisan alliances in the legislature that ensure their majority position and where the Prime Minister can signal policy priorities with different ministerial appointments.[9] In presidential systems, the link between the executive and the legislature is not as direct, and thus the Cabinet is free to serve more potential functions. However,

[9] Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government* (CUP Archive, 1994).

existing scholarship has found a lot of the patterns exhibited by Parliamentary Cabinets in presidential systems.

Octavio Amorim Neto, a leading scholar in the field of Presidential Cabinets, argues that in presidential systems like Brazil, where legislative fragmentation has increased the need to form coalitions with minority parties to increase presidential effectiveness over legislative policymaking, Cabinets can serve a similar coalition-building function as in Parliamentary systems.[10] In another article, Amorim Neto argues that Cabinets also serve a signaling role for presidents in pure presidential systems. The ministers appointed by a president can help them carry out their policy objectives through their respective ministries, and thus their appointments are an indicator of a president's policy priorities.[11] Because this method of working towards policy objectives keeps it within the executive branch, a Cabinet mostly made up of policy-driven appointments also indicates that the president favors ruling through executive actions rather than through collaboration with the legislature. A Cabinet made up mostly of co-partisan or nonpartisan ministers also signals a decree-based governing preference because it means that the president does not anticipate having to work with the minority party to implement their policy objectives.[12] As Inácio et al (2022) argue, a sign of strong presidents is that they feel more liberty when shaping and reshaping their Cabinet, especially in terms of nonpartisan ministers.[13] On the other hand, a more bipartisan Cabinet indicates that a president wants to work with the legislature to achieve

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[10] Octavio Amorim Neto, "Cabinets and Coalitional Presidentialism," in *Routledge Handbook of Brazilian Politics* (Routledge, 2018).
[11] Octavio Amorim Neto, "The Presidential Calculus: Executive Policy Making and Cabinet Formation in the Americas," *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 4 (May 1, 2006): 415–40, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414005282381.
[12] Amorim Neto.
[13] Magna Inácio, Mariana Llanos, and Bruno Pinheiro, "Cabinet Reshuffles in Latin America: A Function of Presidential Reputation," *Government and Opposition*, June 17, 2022, 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2022.19.

their goals.[14] This suggests that the Cabinets in Latin American pure presidential governments could serve three main goals: coalition-building, policymaking, and signaling of governing preferences.

Maria Matilde Ollier introduces other possible roles that Cabinets in Latin America can play based on the case of Argentina, which stands in sharp contrast to Brazil in terms of coalitional presidentialism. She finds that Argentinian presidents take advantage of their Cabinets to improve their ability to govern and implement their policy goals by appointing ministers based on their technical knowledge and policy preferences.[15] Additionally, Daniel Zirker argues that, in a similar way that ministerial appointments can placate or satisfy opposing parties in the legislature, Presidential Cabinets in Latin America can also serve to conciliate other sectors of the government. With a common history of military-to-civil government transitions among these Latin American countries, another role that these Cabinets might play is to resolve conflict with other governmental sectors, especially the military.

Other scholars emphasize the idea that the role of Cabinet ministers changes during the course of an administration. Specifically after the third wave of democratization in Latin America, the chief executive's reputation and the perceived value each Cabinet minister brings are especially important factors in ministerial turnover.[16] According to another study by Martinez-Gallardo, unexpected shocks change the needs of an administration and thus the Cabinet-formation strategy the president had adopted. Based on minister replacement patterns in 12 Latin American countries, she argues that ministerial appointments can serve the function of helping the president adapt to

[14] Amorim Neto, "The Presidential Calculus."
[15] María Matilde Ollier and Pablo Palumbo, "¿Caso Testigo o Caso Único? Patrones de La Formación de Gabinete En El Presidencialismo Argentino (1983-2015)," *Colombia Internacional*, no. 87 (2016): 53–80, https://www.redalyc.org/journal/812/81245608004/.
[16] Inácio, Llanos, and Pinheiro, "Cabinet Reshuffles in Latin America."

unexpected shocks, especially when legislative support for the chief executive is low and when the president has restricted Constitutional power because that makes working through the Cabinet the less costly option in pure presidential systems.[17] In another article co-written with Schleiter based on a similar investigation of Cabinet-formation strategy in those same 12 Latin American countries, they also shed light on the importance of agency problems. They argue that when a president's policy goals diverge from their own party's or when they have poor control over their co-partisans, moral hazard plays a big role in minister appointment and dismissal.[18] When the president—especially one with a weak reputation—feels threatened by an autonomous and politically-strong minister, they are more likely to replace them.[19] As a result, another role that Cabinets can play in Latin America is as agents for the president, and individual minister replacement can work to decrease the agency problem this creates.

Finally, Presidential Cabinets also play an important role in authoritarian governments. Canelo (2016) analyzes the executive policies implemented by the Argentinian Junta government of 1977 and finds that the military government made use of its Cabinet to further an anti-Peronist agenda.[20] Just like in presidential democracies, Cabinets in authoritarian regimes can also serve to signal policy objectives. SE Finer also investigates the function of the Cabinet in military governments. With a wider scope that considers military governments around the world in the

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[17] Cecilia Martínez-Gallardo, "Designing Cabinets: Presidential Politics and Ministerial Instability," *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 6, no. 2 (August 1, 2014): 3–38, https://doi.org/10.1177/1866802X1400600201.
[18] Cecilia Martínez-Gallardo and Petra Schleiter, "Choosing Whom to Trust: Agency Risks and Cabinet Partisanship in Presidential Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies* 48, no. 2 (2015): 231–64, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0010414014544361.
[19] Inácio, Llanos, and Pinheiro, "Cabinet Reshuffles in Latin America."
[20] Paula Canelo, "La Militarización Del Estado Durante La Última Dictadura Militar Argentina. Un Estudio de Los Gabinetes Del Poder Ejecutivo Nacional Entre 1976 y 1983," *Historia Crítica No.40* 62 (October 1, 2016): 57–75, https://doi.org/10.7440/histcrit62.2016.03.

1970s and 1980s, he finds that military Cabinets can sometimes appoint civilian ministers in order to gain support from the civilian population.[21]

Taken together, existing scholarship points to the many potential roles of the Presidential Cabinets in late 20th-century Latin American authoritarian regimes and their subsequent democratic governments. These roles largely center the Presidential Cabinet as a space of conciliation with the Executive Branch, whether for the public, the legislature, political opponents, rogue ministers, or other federal institutions such as the military. Since therefore the specific functions fulfilled by a Cabinet over a certain time period vary based on its political circumstances, the Presidential Cabinets of the young democracies of late 20th-century Latin America were shaped in part by the salient military question that followed the transitions out of brutal military regimes.

2.2 The Military in Latin America

While a clearly flexible institution, the Presidential Cabinet in Latin America often has the power to mediate the relationship between the federal government and the historically influential armed forces. Beginning in the early nineteenth century when revolutionary armies across the region fought for independence from the Spanish empire, the military has long had a central role in most Latin American governments.[22] These revolutionary militants did not hand off control to a civil authority after achieving independence but rather held onto power after taking credit for the new republics. This grew into the era of caudillo rule that was marked by constant disputes between

[21] S E Finer, "The Retreat to the Barracks: Notes on the Practice and the Theory of Military Withdrawal from the Seats of Power," *Third World Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 1985): 16–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436598508419821.
[22] Edwin Lieuwen, "The Changing Role of the Military in Latin America," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 3, no. 4 (October 1961): 559–69, https://doi.org/10.2307/165083.

local chieftains and their personal armed groups in the pursuit of wealth and political power.[23] Even though the latter half of the nineteenth century saw the decline of predatory caudillismo and the professionalization of many Latin American armies—thus pushing them farther away from the political realm—this progress did not last.[24]

Most scholarship about military rule in Latin America comes from a generation of political scientists in the 1960s who—despite some disagreement—generally identified a cycling pattern of military governments in the first half of the twentieth century.[25] After widespread militarism during the early 1800s, the turn of the century and the years around the First World War marked a clear trough.[26] After the Great Depression, military governments resurged and resulted in more than half of the countries in Latin America living under a military regime by 1936.[27] The international turn against fascism and military totalitarianism following the defeat of regimes like Hitler's and Stalin's during the Second World War helped bring Latin America into another era of militaristic decline, dropping to seven military governments in the region in 1947.[28] The cycle continued into the 1960s, with another crest after the Korean War when the majority of countries in the region were once again ruled by military presidents, and another trough in the late 1950s as nine of those military countries transitioned to civilian governments by the new decade.[29]

Scholars like Lieuwen anticipated a continuation of this cyclical pattern but also found evidence for a possible shift toward civilian rule, even arguing that in some countries, the military

[23] Eric R. Wolf and Edward C. Hansen, "Caudillo," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9, no. 2 (January 1967): 168–79, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500004448.
[24] Lieuwen, "The Changing Role of the Military in Latin America."
[25] Dix, "Military Coups and Military Rule in Latin America."
[26] Lieuwen, "The Changing Role of the Military in Latin America."
[27] Lieuwen.
[28] Lieuwen.
[29] Lieuwen.

had fully transitioned to a politically neutral body.[30] However, the region proved to be more politically and militarily volatile than that generation of scholars anticipated. The sixties and seventies bore witness to a massive tide of predatory military rule that was more durable and violent than previously seen. In those 20 years, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and even Chile—which Lieuwen had declared as a country with a fully transitioned military—had military coups d'état in which a head of state was deposed by the armed forces.[31] Even more surprisingly, most of the military regimes established during that era were toppled during the 1980s and have not resurged. Outside of Haiti's and Venezuela's turbulent histories into the new millennium, only Honduras and Ecuador have experienced a military coup after 1990.[32] The evolution of political knowledge regarding the role of the military in Latin American politics is essential to understand, not only because it provides an insight into the general attitudes during the time of increased coup anxieties of the mid-twentieth century, but also because it reveals the inherent difficulties in predicting the trajectory of Latin American militarism and thus why it is important to keep investigating the dynamics between the military and different political and public sectors.

The Military Intervention Index is also a powerful tool to understand the influence of the military on politics both during military regimes and democratic, civilian governments. Dix (1994) argues that MI also sharply increased during the 1970s and then modestly declined during the 1980s, suggesting the military was slow to fully retreat from the political arena.[33] The deterioration

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[30] Lieuwen.
[31] Dix, "Military Coups and Military Rule in Latin America"; Lieuwen, "The Changing Role of the Military in Latin America"; Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America."
[32] "Honduras: Constitutional Crisis and Coup D'état (2009)," *PHR* (blog), accessed December 20, 2023, https://phr.org/honduras-constitutional-crisis-and-coup/; Larry Rohter, "Ecuador Coup Shifts Control To No. 2 Man," *The New York Times*, January 23, 2000, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2000/01/23/world/ecuador-coup-shifts-control-to-no-2-man.html.
[33] Dix, "Military Coups and Military Rule in Latin America."

of military regimes and of military political influence throughout the eighties and nineties appears to be related to the widespread dissatisfaction with this type of political system after decades of experience with violent totalitarianism and helps explains why military regimes have not disrupted the third wave of democratization in Latin America.[34] In the context of the Second World War, dirty wars in countries like Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, El Salvador, and even Mexico made both political and business leaders more cognizant of the dangers of praetorianism, or excessive political influence by the military.[35] The loss of support from business elites is especially important in the context of the strong economic recession of the 1980s, as many realized that the closed nature of military rule made them unreliable in fulfilling their economic priorities and as these types of regimes became associated with economic downturn.[36] Compounded by growing international pressures for the region's democratization, sociopolitical forces in contemporary Latin American democracies have issued in a new era of consistent civilian governance.

2.3 Coup Risk and the Coup Trap

Even though Latin America seemed doomed to a cycle of recurring coup attempts in the first half of the 20th century, a sincere shift towards democratic polities appeared to break this tradition of violence.[37] However, this transition does not mean the region escaped this danger once the exceptionally brutal regimes of that era were toppled, nor that most Latin American countries have escaped this curse today. Existing literature on coup risk paints a thorough picture of the threat the new Latin American democracies of the 1980s faced. Coup risk can be broken down into trigger and structural causes, which differentiate between short-term indicators that propel

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[34] Dix.

[35] Opoku Agyeman, "Setbacks to Political Institutionalisation by Praetorianism in Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 26, no. 3 (September 1988): 403–35, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00011708.

[36] Dix, "Military Coups and Military Rule in Latin America."

[37] Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán, "Breaking Out of the Coup Trap."

golpistas to launch a coup and deep-running institutional factors that make countries more susceptible to the outbreak of a coup.[38]

In terms of coup triggers, several scholars have come to different conclusions about what factors most directly lead to military coups in Latin America, especially before and after the 1960s. However, throughout different articles, there is a consensus about the importance of economic performance. Dix argues that the deterioration of the Latin American economies during the military regimes of the 1970s and 1980s changed public and political perceptions of military rule which led to the subsequent decline of these regimes.[39] According to Fossum, big and poor countries have higher rates of military coups than small, rich countries in the pre-1960s period.[40] He argues that when military governments view the efforts of an incumbent government as insufficient, they step in believing they are better suited to provide for the people. This suggests that dissatisfaction with the economy under a different type of government (in the case of military coups, a civilian or opposing military government) makes the public more amenable to abrupt shifts in governance and imbues the military with a duty to take power in order to fill in the gaps they perceive. This does not only apply to economic shocks but to other episodes of social unrest as well. Fossum finds that military coups before the sixties were more prevalent during times of social unrest and argues that military leaders will orchestrate a coup when they want to re-establish order.[41] He proposes that bigger Latin American countries will likely have more regional disputes that can lead to military intervention, again highlighting the impact of social unrest. Thus, Latin

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[38] Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."
[39] Dix, "Military Coups and Military Rule in Latin America."
[40] Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America."
[41] Fossum.

American military coups appear to be predominantly triggered by social unrest during times of economic downturn and political fragmentation that spark the military's sense of duty.

Additionally, besides the motivation to remedy perceived inadequacies, some political conditions increase the incentives of golpistas to unleash a military coup. When military leaders judge the chances of a successful coup as high and therefore conclude that the costs of an attempted coup are low, they are more likely to carry it out.[42] This is the case during times of social unrest and when the military has allies among the economic and political elite, such as the ideological alignment between the upper class and the military against socialism in 1970s Chile and other similar contexts. Additionally, international pressures that favor democracy contribute to political climates that are less friendly to forceful military intervention.[43] Election years are another time of heightened tension when military leaders can be more likely to carry out a coup. In the time after the election of an administration that the military disliked but before it became strongly established or before an election that was likely to bring to power a group that military leadership opposed during the first half of the 20th century, military coups were more likely; Fossum finds that up to 38% of military coups occurred during election years for that time period.[44]

The last trigger scholars have found evidence for is a neighboring effect whereby nearby countries that were economically developed and regionally powerful influenced each other's rates of military coups during the pre-sixties period.[45] This is potentially related to the perceived risk of orchestrating a military coup since watching a successful military overthrow in a similarly powerful, neighboring country can make military leaders believe in the efficacy of this approach

[42] Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán, "Breaking Out of the Coup Trap"; Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America."
[43] Dix, "Military Coups and Military Rule in Latin America."
[44] Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America."
[45] Fossum.

at that time. While some of these coup risk triggers are based on observations from the turbulent political era prior to the shift brought about by the 1960s, they remain relevant because most Latin American countries have not experienced a coup since the 1960s or 1970s. Focusing on findings that are also supported by studies of the period after the sixties shines a light on what factors were shaping the risk of relapse back into military rule in the 1980s.

In addition to catalysts, structural causes of coup risk are also critically important. The single most significant determinant of coup risk is time since the last military coup, which underscores the coup trap phenomenon that helps explain the cyclical pattern of military rule in Latin America prior to the 1960s.[46] The "coup trap" is the idea that societies with a recent history of violent seizures of power have a precedent of addressing political issues by forcefully overthrowing the government and thus will be more likely to experience another coup d'état because military leaders learn to expect that coups will probably be successful and because the public is accustomed to this approach.[47] This phenomenon reinforces the idea that when military leaders believe they can orchestrate a successful overthrow of the government, they are more likely to carry out a military coup. Moreover, it goes hand-in-hand with the claims many scholars have made arguing that more complex political systems with various checks of power make it more difficult to successfully carry out a military coup.[48]

Institutional factors like civil society strength, regime legitimacy, and electoral competition shape a country's structural coup risk. According to Belkin and Schofer, nongovernmental organizations can advocate against military intervention in politics and a strongly institutionalized

[46] Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán, "Breaking Out of the Coup Trap."
[47] Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán.
[48] Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America."

civil society sector can strengthen civilian influences while acting as a barrier to military forces.[49] They argue for the importance of structural causes such as recent coups, civil society strength, and regime legitimacy. Their inclusion of the latter is based on the idea that when a regime is legitimate in the eyes of the public, there is a shared commitment to institutional channels of political redress and the political environment will be less susceptible to forceful approaches by the military.[50] Finally, Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán demonstrate that competitive electoral systems experience fewer coups and that democratic, competitive regimes do not fall into the coup trap, so another possible structural cause of coup risk is lack of electoral competition.[51] Democracies still in their infancy—like those following regime transitions—are therefore vulnerable to coup outbreaks because of their proximity to the latest military coup and because the institutional factors that help mediate this risk take time to develop.

The danger of the coup trap and risk factors that increase the military's authority in different Latin American countries are essential to understanding recent democratic backsliding trends in this region. Even after de jure democratic transitions, the military in many Latin American countries like Brazil remains autonomous with considerable influence over political manners.[52] In those ways, the military is a significant threat to regime survival and democratic consolidation, especially in Latin America, which has a higher incidence of military coups than other regions.[53] It is also for this reason that the continuing influence of the military through Presidential Cabinets is a potential obstacle to the consolidation of democracy in many Latin American countries.

[49] Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."
[50] Belkin and Schofer.
[51] Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán, "Breaking Out of the Coup Trap."
[52] Zaverucha, "The Degree of Military Political Autonomy during the Spanish, Argentine and Brazilian Transitions."
[53] Zaverucha; Zirker, "The Military Ministers and Political Change in Post-Authoritarian Brazil"; Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán, "Breaking Out of the Coup Trap."

3 Theory

As countries in Latin America transitioned from military dictatorships to civilian democracies over the course of the 1980s, the new political institutions had to grapple with how to dismantle the powers of the past while protecting the new government from both internal and external threats and establishing a secure democratic tradition. During these transitions, lots of questions arose about the new place the military would take under the government. While some countries wanted to begin the new democratic era by disentangling the military from the political arena, many also sought to placate members of the armed forces to guarantee their acceptance of the new political order. The amnesties granted to officers who participated in severe human rights violations during the military regime are evidence of this desire to conciliate the military leaders who were being stripped of power in the hopes that they would cooperate with the new governments rather than attempt another coup.[54] This mindset is driven by fears that disgruntled military leaders would attempt another coup and throw Latin America back into an endless cycle of military rule and coup attempts.

At the end of the brutal dirty wars and cruel, repressive military dictatorships in countries like Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina, political leaders recognized the dangers of letting their nations slip back into the cycle of military rule more than ever before. The period of transition from Latin American military governments to new republics is an agglomeration of established risk factors for the outbreak of a military coup. The proximity to the latest military coup during these transitional years, the economic recession affecting many countries in the 1980s, the institutional immaturity affecting state legitimacy, and the infancy of most civil society and

[54] Dix, "Military Coups and Military Rule in Latin America."

electoral mechanisms—compounded right after the first democratic elections by the higher risk posed by electoral periods—made the first few years of the democracies that emerged during Latin America's third wave of democratization times full of fear of democratic collapse. As they moved away from the transition, this coup risk began to decrease but remained a constant concern.

Since the Presidential Cabinet is fully at the disposal of the chief executive as both a signaling mechanism and a political body to incorporate voices and expertise from other national sectors, this institution provided a way to appease the military and address the anxieties of the new administration by appointing military leaders to the Cabinet in order to communicate to military authorities that they do not intend on entirely leaving the military out of political decision-making in this new democratic era and to start collaborating with these actors from the onset. In the same way that presidents use their Cabinet appointments to form partisan coalitions by exchanging support in the legislature for executive power through a ministry, Latin American presidents who feared the outbreak of a coup post-transition could form an informal alliance with the military by trading a seat at the table of executive decision-making for compliance with democratic institutions and cooperation with the new administration. This suggests that when presidents in young Latin American democracies perceived a high risk of coup, they were more likely to appoint one or a few military leaders to their Cabinet.

The signaling power of ministerial appointments also comes into play when responding to an escalated coup risk. Leading Cabinet formation literature proposes that Cabinet posts are often filled by experts in a particular political issue or technical skill, and thus they convey a president's political priorities since they appoint experts who will help them accomplish their policy goals. Following this same mechanism, the appointment of a military minister after a transition to democracy can signal to the military that the president cares about addressing the needs of the

military and about making sure that military voices in the government are still heard. This can help a president who is concerned about a potential coup mitigate this threat by showing the military that they are a priority in the new democratic order. Signaling can also decrease coup risk more directly by dampening the military's sense of duty to intervene against poor leaders. Presidents who appoint members of opposing parties or other political opponents to their Cabinet are signaling that they do not plan on simply ruling by decree and would rather collaborate with the opposition.[55] In presidential systems, the appointment of military ministers could accomplish a similar function to appointing partisan opponents since it indicates a desire to work with the military just as the latter demonstrates a willingness to work with the opposition through the legislature. This broadcasts the message that the president does not plan on subverting checks on power and in fact wants to work with other sectors of government like the military rather than exercising independent control. Because the military often considers itself as the natural protector of the people and can be activated to orchestrate a coup based on this feeling of duty to usurp inadequate or dangerous political leaders, these types of collaborative-rule signals can show the military that this president does not pose a danger to the people as a potential despot nor to the presence of the military in the political arena, and therefore there is no need to interfere. This means that presidents can choose to appoint a few military ministers to signal their willingness to work with the military and to cooperate with other sectors of government through a collaborative style of governance that makes the military feel less threatened and more supported by the administration, assuaging coup concerns.

The post-transition period was turbulent for many Latin American democracies. Often characterized as the "most traumatic economic event in Latin America's economic history," the

[55] Amorim Neto, "The Presidential Calculus."

1980s saw the region plunge into deep economic recession after two oil price shocks in the seventies rendered a lot of countries unable to service their foreign debt.[56] This cast a wide shadow over the newly democratic republics. In addition, some transitions were not always widely welcomed and military leaders even threatened to carry out a coup in some particular instances. This means that the presidents in office during these difficult times likely had to respond to severe economic and security shocks. Cabinet reshuffles often occur as a result of shocks as president can use ministerial appointments to respond to issues that arise in the middle of an administration. A president could decide to appoint a military minister in the face of military threats as a way to appease members of the armed forces who want to intervene. Additionally, a military faction blaming the head of state for economic suffering among the populace might feel driven to take control an inadequate government as part of their duty to the country, so appointing a military minister might mitigate that danger by giving the military a channel through which they can perform their duty without a hostile takeover. Finally, the reputation of the president suffers during times of economic downturn and political instability, which might lead to cabinet reshuffles meant to improve their image among the public and among different government sectors, like the military. All in all, the shocks that hit many Latin American presidents soon after democratization likely increased the already high tension between the executive branch and the military, which presidents could address through the appointment of military leaders to their Cabinet.

On the other hand, some of the existing literature suggests that fears of another military coup might lead to the complete expulsion of the military from the executive branch. One of the

[56] José Antonio Ocampo, "The Latin American Debt Crisis in Historical Perspective," in *Life After Debt*, International Economic Association Series (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137411488_4#:~:text=The%20debt%20crisis%20of%20the,in%20Latin%20America's%20economic%20history.; Jocelyn Sims and Jessie Romero, "Latin American Debt Crisis of the 1980s," Federal Reserve History, November 22, 2013, https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/latin-american-debt-crisis.

functions of Cabinet reshuffles is to address the issue of moral hazard inherent in any principal-agent relationship, such as that between presidents and their ministers. Once a minister is appointed, they are able to act in ways contrary to the wishes of the president. The principal is then able to replace rogue ministers to solve this problem. As a result, if the military starts to make threats of intervention while a military officer is serving on the Presidential Cabinet, the president could respond by dismissing the military minister for abusing their authority and failing to keep the armed forces in line. Additionally, when presidents with poor reputations feel threatened by the power of their ministers, they are more likely to fire them.[57] This means that during times of low confidence in the chief executive such as the economic crisis of the 1980s, a military minister who oversteps their authority could make the president feel personally threatened enough to remove them from the Cabinet. Finally, scholarship on military coups suggests that coup risk is higher when the armed forces have lots of allies within the political and business elites.[58] With these supporters, a military coup is more likely to succeed, and therefore the military is more willing to go through the risk of attempt a coup. It would therefore be reasonable for a president to stop any military appointments to the Cabinet in order to make sure that the military is separated from political elites and that the armed forces do not have a player already in government. Even though these past findings elucidate the problems that arise from having military officers in a Presidential Cabinet and suggest that having too many military ministers would be detrimental to the risk of a military coup, they do not invalidate the potential stabilizing benefits of their initial appointment.

[57] Inácio, Llanos, and Pinheiro, "Cabinet Reshuffles in Latin America."
[58] Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America."

Therefore, I expect that after periods of military rule characterized by a high number of military ministers since these governments are by nature made up of military officers, the proportion of military ministers in the Presidential Cabinet will drop following the transition but the full removal of the military from the executive branch will be delayed and thus the proportion of military ministers will look like a steep drop followed by gradual decline. I also expect that presidents of newly democratic countries in Latin America will use the appointment of military ministers as a strategic move meant to appease military leaders who are resisting the depoliticization of the armed forces, especially during times of heightened fears of a military coup. This leads to the main hypothesis:

> *H_1:* *After the transition to democracy, an increase in coup risk will be associated with an increase in the proportion of military ministers in the Presidential Cabinet.*

However, coup risk was not only relevant after transitions to democracy but also during the military regimes of the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, non-democratic governments face higher risks of being overthrown by a coup than competitive democracies.[59] There are three main forces that affect the relationship between coup risk and the number of military ministers in the Cabinet of the chief executive in Latin American military governments. Firstly, when coup risk is high because dissenting factions of the military judge the current regime to be inadequate, the chief executive could appoint another military minister that belongs to the opposing faction to appease their concerns and allow them to influence governance, taking advantage of the coalitional function of Presidential Cabinets. On the other hand, the dissent that fuels social unrest and thus increases the risk of a coup might instead be coming from civilian authorities. This situation would

[59] Fabrice Lehoucq and Anibal Perez-Linan, "Regimes, Competition, and Military Coups in Latin America," *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (July 1, 2014): 1105–29, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013488561.

call for the appointment of a civilian minister in order to placate the opposition by opening the government outside of the military and collaborating with civilian powers.[60] Finally and similar to an elected president's response to reputational concerns, the military regime may feel threatened and choose to appoint more military ministers to convey their strength during periods of political weakness or poor reputation among the public, when they fear a potential takeover. As a result, I also expect a positive relationship between coup risk and the proportion of military ministers before the transitions to democracy similar to the post-transition period.

These effects are more likely in regimes where the military has a historically political role and where it has policy preferences since these characteristics underscore a motivation to stay involved in politics. Additionally, military regimes that were especially violent are also a better fit for this theory because such brutal recent histories make the risk of lapsing back into a military dictatorship even more alarming in the eyes of the first democratic administration and therefore make it more likely that the president will make costly concessions to preserve the new democratic order. Consequently, I only apply this theory to the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes of the sixties and seventies, which were characterized by ideologically driven militaries and vicious dirty wars.

4 Data and Methodology

4.1 Case Selection

To explore the relationship between military influences over Presidential Cabinets and coup risk, I focus on countries that transitioned from a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime to at least a nominally democratic regime in the late 20th century. Even though a large part of the current literature on coups and military governments takes a regional focus and discusses Latin America

[60] Finer, "The Retreat to the Barracks."

as a whole, investigating the relationship between those two factors in newly democratic regimes calls for greater specificity in the cases selected for analysis because the political role filled by the military and the reaction by the chief executive to coup threats depend on the type of regime before the transition. While there was a lot of variation among the authoritarian and military governments of Latin America in the 1960s and the 1970s, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay are all considered bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes.

In the seminal text *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism*, where Guillermo O'Donnell formulates this regime type by outlining seven features that distinguish BA regimes from other forms of authoritarian or military governments, BA regimes are characterized as strongly socially stratified where the ruling class is the upper bourgeoisie.[61] Government institutions enforce the political and economic exclusion of the popular classes and limit political power to the armed forces, large enterprises, and high-level bureaucracy.[62] This makes BA regimes ideal for analyzing the influence of military ministers because the military already played a crucial policy role in the pre-transition regimes that was grounded in their alliance and preferences shared with the upper class. As a result, the military in the new democracies born from BA regimes will have an interest in influencing governance and policy and will have connections with the upper classes and bureaucratic actors to re-enter the political arena. For these reasons, I collected data for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay.[63] Limiting the analysis to these four countries does not eliminate variation between regimes; the influence of Peronism in Argentina and Augusto Pinochet's brutal dictatorship in

[61] Guillermo O'Donnell, "The Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State," in *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina 1966-1973 in Comparative Perspective*, trans. James McGuire (University of California Press, 1988), https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft4v19n9n2&chunk.id=d0e923&toc.id=d0e85&brand=ucpress.
[62] O'Donnell.
[63] Claudia Heiss, "Bureaucratic Authoritarianism," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2017), 1–3, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118430873.est0038.

Chile shaped those governments in complicated ways. Additionally, the transition process for each of these countries looked different. However, it does narrow down a very complex region to countries with similar pre-transition experiences. To capture enough information about trends in the appointment of military ministers to these Presidential Cabinets before and after each regime change, I collect data for the 10 years before the democratic transition and for the 20 years after.

4.2 Main Variable of Interest: Military Ministers

In order to investigate trends in military presence in Presidential Cabinets, I take advantage of the 2020 WhoGov dataset produced by Jacob Nyrup and Stuart Bramwell. They sought to compile an exhaustive collection of biographical data that uncovers the governing elites at the top of executive branches around the world and over time.[64] The resulting dataset of ministers and world leaders covers 177 countries from 1966 to 2021 for a total of 56,063 members of national Cabinets.[65] Nyrup and Bramwell code the military status of each minister based on the title that was associated with that name in the data. For example, if a minister in the dataset has the title of "General" in front of their name, then they are counted as a part of the military. While this technique is a low-cost way of seeing military influences among the governing elite in massive longitudinal data, it is not sufficiently accurate when the focus is on military ministers, as is the case for this thesis. As a result, I supplement the WhoGov ministers dataset by manually coding whether each minister was an officer in the military.

The main empirical contribution of this project is a dataset of the military status of all the ministers who served in the Cabinets of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay from the 1970s to

[64] Jacob Nyrup and Stuart Bramwell, "Who Governs? A New Global Dataset on Members of Cabinets," *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 4 (November 2020): 1366–74, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000490.
[65] "WhoGov Dataset," Nuffield Politics Research Centre, accessed April 6, 2024, https://politicscentre.nuffield.ox.ac.uk/whogov-dataset/download-dataset/.

the early 2000s. Following the convention established by Nyrup and Bramwell, I code a minister as being part of the military if they have the rank of a military officer. Another reason why this is appropriate in this case is that some of the countries I focus on, like Brazil, have compulsory military service. In those cases, focusing on who served in the military does not capture a close connection between a minister and the values and concerns of the military since simply fulfilling your state-mandated military service does not establish a long-term link to this institution, empower someone to influence the armed forced, or imbue them with values learned through military professionalization. Since I am interested in the influence the institution of the military can have on the executive branch through people with military ties, simply serving in the military is not sufficient to capture this relationship that ranking officers do have. I also use an alternative operationalization of this variable as a robustness check to make sure that my results are not contingent on this specific definition, especially since Cabinet sizes are relatively small and a change of one minister could change the military proportion significantly. This alternative conceptualization codes a minister as military if they were awarded an officer-level military order honor or if they graduate from a military academy, capturing some ambiguous cases that do not have the rank of an officer but have extensive ties to the military through military school or being honored by that institution. I searched for each minister online to verify their military status and the sources that I used are summarized in Table 1.

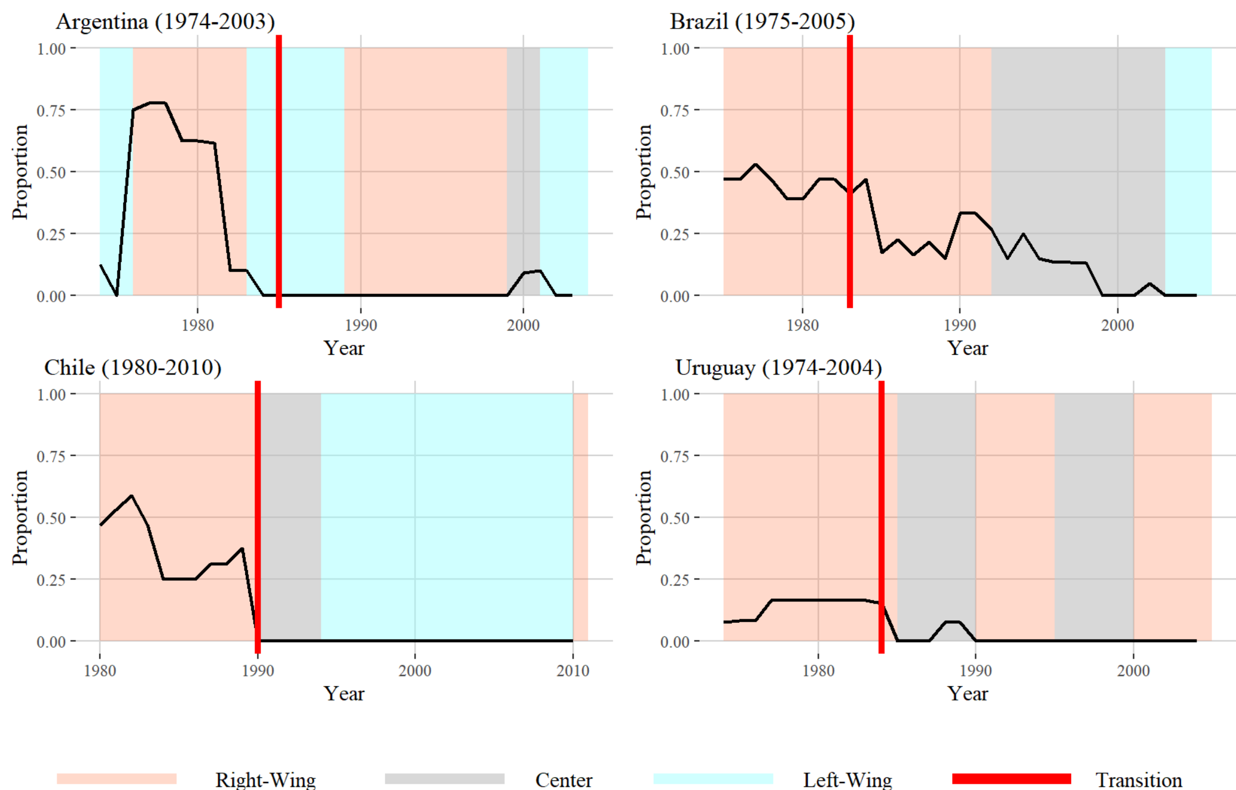
Table 1: Data Collection Summary

Country	Years Collected	Main Sources Used
Argentina	1974-2003*	Todo Argentina Biografias, Encyclopedia Britannica, Turnover and Death News Articles
Brazil	1975-2005	FGV CPDOC, Academia Bio Pages, Senate Pages
Chile	1980-2010	Anales de la Republica, Death News Articles, BCN Parliamentary Biographies, Academia Bio Pages
Uruguay	1974-2004	LaRed21 Article about Civilians Accomplices, Federacion Estatal de Foros por la Memoria, Archivos del Terror de Uruguay, Death News Articles

Note:
A full list of sources can be found in the appendix
* Argentina 1973 data is not available.

By using this manually collected data, I was able to improve the validity of the military status variable at the center of my analysis. Whereas the original method of coding military status based on titles associated with the names of ministers in the dataset yielded 73 military ministers, verifying ranking officers through internet searches suggests that there were actually 96 officers in the relevant countries and years. The alternative operationalization codes even more of those ministers as military for a total of 105. When information was unavailable for any of the ministers, I defaulted to the original value for military status based on titles associated with names, so if the manual military variable is biased, it likely missed some ministers who were military officers rather than assigning a military rank incorrectly. The original military status variable missed at least 23 military ministers, wrongly coding 3.2% of all ministers in the dataset. Manually collecting military rank data for each minister allows for more accurate regression analysis, especially when small changes in absolute totals can have drastic effects on the proportion of ministers with a military rank I use as the main dependent variable. Tables A1 and A2 provide a summary of the counts of military ministers by country-year and administration, respectively.

Figure 1: Proportion of Military Ministers



Time series plots for the proportion of military ministers in the Presidential Cabinet of each of the four countries of interest show that levels of military influence in Presidential Cabinets vary across years and between countries. There generally appears to be a steep drop in military ministers around the transition to democracy. However, this change happens on or right after the transition for countries like Chile and Uruguay while it appears to anticipate the transition in Argentina and occurs at a more gradual rate in Brazil. Additionally, at first glance, the time series plots suggest that the proportion of military ministers in the Cabinet may be lower under left-wing administrations for countries like Argentina and Brazil. At the descriptive level, there is some preliminary evidence that military minister appointments can be used to respond to ongoing military threats or sudden shocks to democratic stability. In Argentina and Uruguay, there are small

spikes in the proportion of military ministers after their respective democratic transitions that show the executive branch is not free from military influence in Presidential Cabinets under democratic governments. In Brazil, military presence in Presidential Cabinets is a lot more resistant to change, fluctuating in the 20 years after their democratic transition and not hitting 0% until the turn of the century. This pattern could reflect the Brazilian military's unwillingness to let go of executive power even after the regime change. However, the proportion of military ministers only tells half the story and must be considered in the context of coup risk.

4.3 Coup Risk

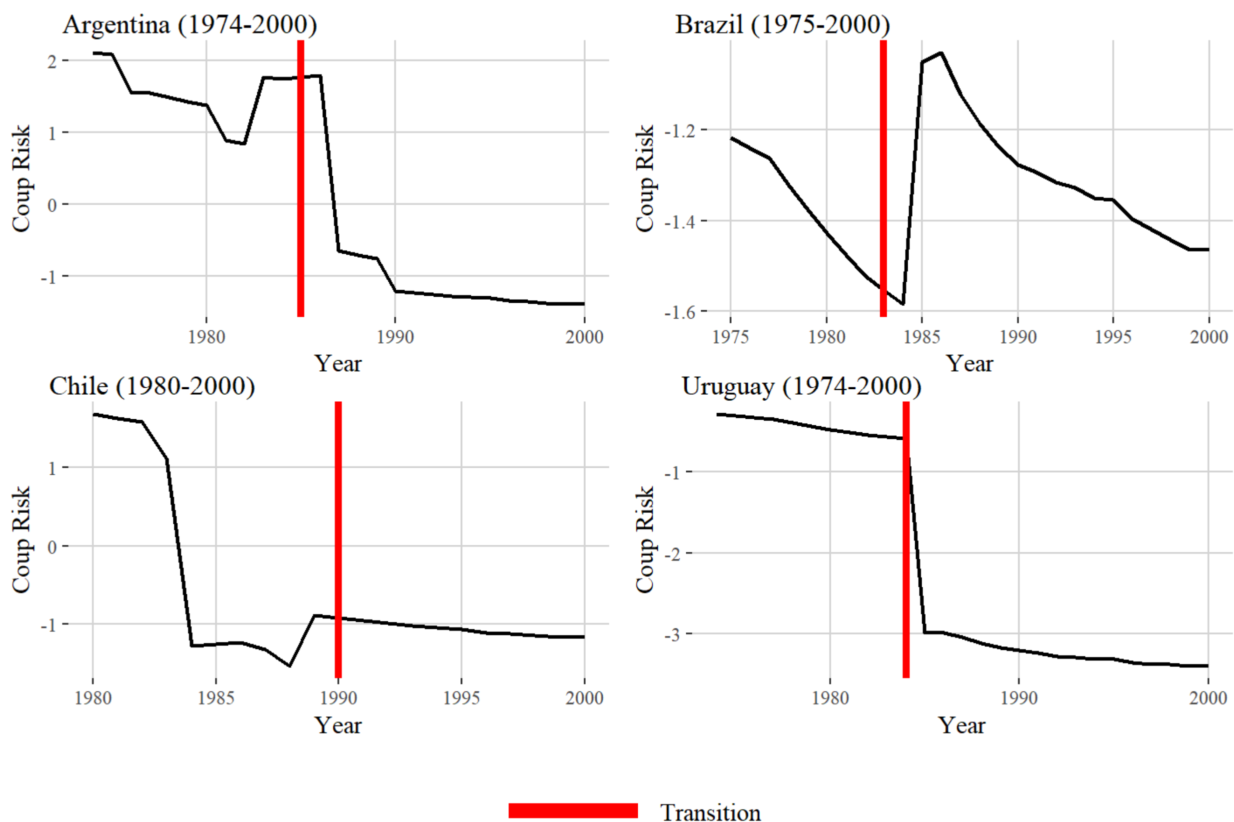
Since existing theories suggest that variations in the presence of military ministers in Presidential Cabinets might be a result of strategic appointments by chief executives reacting to a military sector reluctant to hand off power, it is essential to capture the threat posed by the military to the new democratic regime. Throughout 20th-century Latin American history, the military threatened military regimes through coups that unseated different types of political leaders. As a result, one way to capture the danger the military poses in newly democratic systems is to measure coup risk, which is complicated due to its many immediate and structural causes. To overcome the difficulties of operationalizing coup risk, I rely on the measure developed by Belkin and Schofer 2003. They improve on previous coup risk indicators (such as Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller 1992) by considering structural causes, which add an important dimension to understanding the likelihood of a coup breaking out because they take into account the system as a whole and its history.[66]

[66] Belkin and Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk."

Belkin and Schofer incorporate three causes of coup risk into their indicator based on the compelling theoretical mechanisms behind them and whether they're appropriate for large-n studies. The first structural cause incorporated into this indicator is the strength of civil society—measured as the number of memberships in international nongovernmental organizations—since political and economic associations provide a medium to resist military intervention.[67] This indicator also includes regime legitimacy because the military is less likely to interfere in politics when the public trusts the government and when there are legitimate channels to address political dissent. Belkin and Schofer create a legitimacy index based on electoral and policy competitiveness and on regulation of political participation.[68] The last variable included in the coup risk indicator is whether there was a coup in the previous 10 years.[69] These three components are weighed equally in the final coup risk indicator as z-scores added together.[70] These three factors are political phenomena that can be discerned by the head of state, and therefore this variable should sufficiently act as a proxy for the coup risk perceived by the incumbent administration. The final dataset produced by Belkin and Schofer covers 167 countries between 1960 and 2000, which I incorporate into the minister data aggregated to the country-year level.

[67] Belkin and Schofer.
[68] Belkin and Schofer.
[69] Belkin and Schofer.
[70] Belkin and Schofer.

Figure 2: Coup Risk



Coup risk, as measured by Belkin and Schofer, also exhibits drastic shifts around democratic transitions according to the time trends in Figure 2. For Argentina and Uruguay, the coup risk drops significantly on or right after the year of transition. Coup risk also decreases in the case of Chile, but about five years before the transition, and increases slightly right before. On the other hand, this coup risk measure increases dramatically after Brazil's transition to democracy and then begins to decrease at a moderate rate. Whereas other countries even out at their respective lowest values for coup risk, Brazil's time trend shows that coup risk is higher or as high after the transition to democracy compared to the BA regime. It also reveals that coup risk remains a threat to democracy for a longer time in Brazil than in the other countries of interest, reminiscent of the enduring trends of military ministers in Brazilian Presidential Cabinets. However, it is also

important to note that the range for coup risk in Brazil is much lower than in other countries like Argentina and Chile, where it varies from just below -1 to around 2. Another notable observation is that this measure reaches a point in all these cases after their democratic transitions where coup risk permanently begins to trend downwards, albeit at different rates. Since military minister proportion also tends to generally decrease after transitions, descriptive time trends suggest there might be a relationship between these two variables, but a formal statistical model is necessary to further investigate that apparent relationship.

4.4 Models

To analyze the relationship between coup risk and military ministers, I utilize two main linear regression models on data at the country-year level where coup risk is the principal independent variable—represented by C_{it}—and the proportion of military ministers is the response variable M_{it}, where *i* is an index for country and *t* is an index for year. This means that β_1 is the main coefficient of interest. Model 1 includes all the data collected before and after democratic transitions. In addition to the bivariate model that only includes the two variables of interest, different specifications of model 1 increase the complexity of the model, of which the full version is specified below:

$$(1) \quad M_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 C_{it} + \beta_2 C_{it} \times T_{it} + \boldsymbol{X}_{it} + \eta_i + \varepsilon$$

In this model, the coefficient β_2 captures the interaction effect of whether an observation is after the democratic transition (T_{it}) and coup risk. The term $\boldsymbol{X}_{it}$ is a vector of control variables that could also affect the proportion of military ministers. Both the ideology of the ruling party and the chief executive's military status could be sources of omitted variable bias in a bivariate specification, so they are included as controls in the full model. Right-leaning parties in Latin

America are generally more supportive of the armed forces due to the strong-arm style and "tough on crime" rhetoric that characterize them.[71] Also, the military BA governments of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay were economically right-leaning and formed alliances with right-wing political and business elites, so right-wing presidents in power soon after the fall of the military regimes might still hold those sentiments and be more willing to appoint military ministers.[72] The president's military status is a relevant variable because of an officer's stronger relationship with the armed forces. Additionally, the four countries I focus on have different histories, democratic transitions, types of leadership, and more, which make the inclusion of country-fixed effects necessary, represented by η_i. Finally, ε is the error term.

A secondary model focuses only on data post-democratic transitions. This model provides a clearer picture of the relationship between coup risk and the proportion of military ministers in the democratic systems that arose from the BA regimes of Latin America. Because coup risk is generally higher during these military authoritarian regimes and lower after the democratic transition, the second model helps address concerns that β_1 in model 1 simply captures the effect of regime type. This model is specified below:

$$(2) \quad M_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 C_{it} + \boldsymbol{X}_{it} + \eta_i + \varepsilon$$

[71] Thomas Kestler, "Radical, Nativist, Authoritarian—Or All of These? Assessing Recent Cases of Right-Wing Populism in Latin America," *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 14, no. 3 (December 1, 2022): 289–310, https://doi.org/10.1177/1866802X221117565.
[72] O'Donnell, "The Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State."

5 Results

The principal model shows some evidence of a positive relationship between coup risk and the proportion of military ministers in Presidential Cabinets. Table 2 shows the results of this model and its various specifications.

Table 2: Effect of Coup Risk on Proportion of Military Ministers in BA Regimes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Coup Risk	0.07*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)
Coup Risk x Post-Transition				−0.12*** (0.02)
Left Ruling Ideology			−0.20*** (0.04)	−0.12** (0.04)
Right Ruling Ideology			0.05 (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)
Leader Military Status			0.21*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.03)
Num.Obs.	101	101	101	101
R2	0.200	0.359	0.727	0.812
Country Fixed Effects	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

The proportion of military ministers is the number of ministers with the rank of a military officer divided by the total number of ministers in a Cabinet at the year-country level. Coup risk is an index calculated equally from the involvement in civil society, a regime legitimacy index, and history with coups.

The bivariate model that simply analyzes the linear relationship between coup risk and the proportion of military ministers has a positive coefficient that is statistically significant to the 99.9% confidence level indicating that as coup risk rises, the proportion of military ministers also

rises on average.[73] This direct relationship is confirmed by more complex versions of model 1. In the specification without interaction effects, the main coefficient is 0.06, statistically significant to the 99.9% confidence level. This can be interpreted to suggest that as coup risk increases by 1, the proportion of ministers with a military rank increases by 6 percentage points on average. When the model considers whether an observation is before or after the democratic transition, β_1 is 0.10, statistically significant to the 99.9% confidence level. This means that an increase of 1 in coup risk during a BA military regime is associated with an increase of 10 percentage points in ministers with military rank. The relationship between coup risk and the proportion of military ministers is completely different for post-transition democracies. The interaction effect suggests that an increase of 1 in coup risk in democratic Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay corresponds to an average decrease of 2 percentage points in the proportion of military ministers. This effect is also statistically significant to the 99.9% confidence level and suggests that the overall estimate for the effect of coup risk on the proportion of military ministers may be mostly driven by the pre-transition years.

Even though the estimates for this model are strong and statistically significant, they are not enough to establish a causal relationship. Even though I include an interaction term for before and after the democratic transition, the drastic changes in both coup risk and the proportion of military ministers that followed the fall of these authoritarian military regimes complicate the predictive power of this model. The model might instead be reflecting this pattern of democratization due to possible confounders. However, with the inclusion of country fixed effects, control variables, and interaction terms, these results can be interpreted to suggest that the

[73] The assumptions for the use of this linear model are tested in Figure A4 and Figure A5. Errors are normally distributed and even though there is some heteroskedasticity, it is not enough to be concerning.

contemporary history of these four BA regimes that experienced democratization near the end of the 20th century has evidence of a positive relationship between coup risk and the proportion of military ministers in Presidential Cabinets, especially during periods of military, authoritarian rule.

This model also reveals that ruling ideology and leader military status likely have an effect on the proportion of military ministers in the Presidential Cabinet. For the model specifications with and without interaction effects, having a leftist chief executive is associated with a lower proportion of military ministers when compared to a centrist ruling ideology of at least 12 percentage points, significant to at least the 99% confidence interval. The full model with interaction effects also finds that right-wing leaders are associated with more military ministers than centrists to the 95% confidence level. Finally, presidents that were military officers are associated with a 21-percentage point increase in the proportion of military ministers to the 99.9% confidence level. While this likely captures the difference in military ministers serving on Presidential Cabinets before and after democratic transitions since military chief executives became quite rare after democracy was established for the long term, it also suggests that presidents with a military rank have stronger connections to the military and are more likely to appoint these military allies to their Cabinet. The fact that the R^2 increases to 73% and 81% from 36% when these control variables are included suggests that they are strong predictors of the proportion of military ministers in Presidential Cabinets and improve the validity of the model.

Because the interaction between post-transition and coup risk is statistically significant in Table 2, I employ model 2 to investigate how the relationship between the proportion of military ministers and coup risk changes for only the democratic periods. Table 3 shows the results of this analysis.

Table 3: Effect of Coup Risk on Proportion of Military Ministers in BA Regimes after Democratic Transitions

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Coup Risk	0.008 (0.01)	0.002 (0.01)	0.009 (0.02)
Left Ruling Ideology			0.001 (0.04)
Right Ruling Ideology			0.03 (0.02)
Leader Military Status			−0.007 (0.07)
Num.Obs.	58	58	58
R2	0.011	0.677	0.692
Country Fixed Effects	No	Yes	Yes

The proportion of military ministers is the number of ministers with the rank of a military officer divided by the total number of ministers in a Cabinet at the year-country level. Coup risk is an index calculated equally from the involvement in civil society, a regime legitimacy index, and history with coups.

When I only focus on years after the democratic transitions, the results lose all statistical significance. Other than the coefficient for right-ruling ideology, the coefficients in Table 3 are in the opposite direction than expected given the results of model 1. However, since no coefficient is statistically significant, this simply suggests that there is not enough data or instances of military minister appointments after the transitions to democracy to understand how these different factors affect the proportion of military ministers serving in democratic Presidential Cabinets. These results indicate that there is insufficient evidence about the effect of coup risk on the proportion of ministers with military rank after democratic transitions.

5.1 Robustness Checks

To confirm the validity of these results and make sure that the predictor and response variables aptly capture the issues at play, I run three different robustness checks that all yield very similar results to the main model. Firstly, I consider an alternative operationalization of the military ministers response variable that counts military ministers as not only those with a military rank but also those who attended a military academy and those who have been awarded an order of military merit. The results of this model—reported in Table A3—are almost identical to those in Table 2. Only β_1 in the model with interaction effects is slightly different, suggesting an effect of 9 percentage points rather than 10. This confirms the results discussed above and also suggests that the operationalization of military ministers is not sensitive to definition-related shifts.

I employ two additional robustness checks that use alternative versions of the main independent variable. The first isolates one of the components of the coup risk measure as the principal independent variable rather than using this index as created by Belkin and Schofer. Specifically, in the model reported in Table A4, I use the negative years since the last successful coup so that lower values correspond with lower risk in order to keep the estimates consistent with the main models. These results are very similar to the main models. The estimates for β_1 using the entire dataset are again positive and statistically significant, though the magnitude of this effect is generally lower and some of the specifications have weaker statistical significance. The interaction effect is negative and statistically significant to the 99.9% confidence level, but it renders the estimate for the effect of coup risk during democratic periods to 0. I explore the main relationship with this alternative measure of coup risk focusing only on post-transition data and find a small, negative effect. This model suggests that with an additional year since a successful coup, we can expect the proportion of military ministers to decrease by 0.7 percentage points. Even though the

magnitude of this effect is very low, it does reflect the negative effect suggested by the estimate of the interaction effect in the second main model. However, because this operationalization of the independent variable focuses only on proximity to previous coups while leaving out the influence of civil society and regime legitimacy and since there were no successful coups in this dataset after the respective transition years, this model might be more closely capturing the effect of time than of coup risk.

Finally, I also consider a version of the two main models that uses $C_{i,t-1}$ as the main independent variable. This is because my theory suggests that military minister appointments are strategic decisions by a chief executive seeking to appease the armed forces when they are reluctant to give up power in a newly democratic system. As a result, I use the previous year's coup risk because a president may be reacting to threats the country recently experienced, which might be better captured by the lagged version of the original variable. The results of this model, as reported in Table A5, are also almost identical to the main findings. Once again, estimates that utilize the whole dataset suggest a positive and statistically significant relationship between coup risk and the proportion of military ministers and a negative and statistically significant interaction effect, the only difference being that β_1 is 0.01 lower for the specifications that include controls when compared to Table 2. The specifications that only use post-transition data yield estimates that are positive and statistically significant to the 95% confidence level when controls and country fixed effects are included. This is similar to the results in Table 3. This robustness check helps assuage some fears of reverse causality because the proportion of military ministers cannot be used to predict the previous year's coup risk, especially since the time trends in Figure 2 demonstrate sufficient variation in this measure across time.

6 Case Studies

To help illustrate what the empirical results show and how the relationship between coup risk and the proportion of military ministers behaves differently under different national contexts, I choose two contrasting cases to study more closely: Brazil and Chile. Figure 1 reveals that these two countries had very different experiences after transitioning to democracy, even if they were both the same regime type during their last period of authoritarian military rule. Brazil still had a considerable military presence in their Cabinet for years after becoming a democratic polity. Even though the proportion of ministers with a military title does immediately drop from its steady pre-transition levels and then steadily declines post-transition, the full removal of the military from the executive branch is held up until the turn of the century and military ministers return even after that point. Chile stands in sharp contrast to that reality as the only country that had no military ministers at any point of the first 20 years after their democratic transition. Rates of military ministers in Chile were mostly steady though on a slight decline before it became a democratic republic. After the military was removed from power in 1990, military officers were fully kept out of the Presidential Cabinet. I examine the differences in the military regimes, transitional processes, and approaches to Cabinet formation post-transition of Brazil and Chile to understand why their Presidential Cabinets looked so different after transitioning to democracy.

6.1 Brazil

The military dictatorship in Brazil began with a coup in 1964 that unseated a populist democratic government and lasted until 1985. According to Codato 2006, the new regime issued in a major institutional change where the military consumed the political realm to establish a true military government. Rather than a single military despot or a small group of high-ranking officials

defying the government and replacing the chief executive, the entire "military apparatus" took control after decades of seeing themselves as the moderator of conflicts between civilian politicians, partly driven by anti-populist and right-wing ideological motivations.[74] Another important trait of this regime was violent repression; extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture, censorship, and persecution by police forces characterized life under this military government.[75] According to Human Rights Watch, the military government committed countless human rights abuses, especially against the Araguaia communist guerilla movement in the seventies.[76]

Since the military government lacked an ideological focal point or a single core of power that is crucial to dictatorships organized around a personalist leader or a political party, many different generals took over the presidency over the two decades the military institution was in power and therefore the regime was vulnerable to differences and conflicts among factions. When the castellista faction took power in 1974, they began a process of liberalization that re-introduced some liberal rights and even re-established consistent elections, even if the rules were manipulated to keep the military in power.[77] As the lack of decision-making hierarchies, ideological conflicts among military and civilian factions, and lack of framework to pick the next president exposed the weakness of this political system, the castellistas thought political liberalization would allow them to institutionalize political mechanisms that preserved the authoritarian system with more stability and legitimacy. This stage of the Brazilian military regime—often referred to as a "politics of opening"—began a long process that ended with a transition to democracy in 1985. By gradually

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[74] Adriano Codato, "A Political History of the Brazilian Transition from Military Dictatorship to Democracy," trans. Miriam Adelman, *Revista de Sociologia e Política* 2 (January 1, 2006).
[75] "Brazil: Prosecute Dictatorship-Era Abuses," Human Rights Watch, April 14, 2009, https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/04/14/brazil-prosecute-dictatorship-era-abuses.
[76] "Brazil."
[77] Codato, "A Political History of the Brazilian Transition from Military Dictatorship to Democracy."

opening the military regime, military leaders were able to control the terms and pace of their surrender of power. This political "opening" led to more societal pressures calling for democratization; as the military regime took its boot off the public's throat, opposition and labor groups were able to stand and demand change.[78] In response to these calls and still heavily influencing the transition process facilitated predominantly by political elites, the military stepped down from power with assurances that they would keep their "privileged status" in Brazil.[79] Even the new Constitution of 1988 formalized the role of the military in maintaining law and order, institutionalizing a duty felt by many members of the armed forces in Latin America.[80]

Codato's thorough analysis of Brazil's democratic transition proposes that the military slowly removed members of the armed forces from political and bureaucratic responsibilities "to guarantee that there would be no pretexts for an open impugnation of the extreme right that could be taken as a retreat from the 'Revolution' and thus serve as a pretext for open contestation by the extreme right, military and civilian…as not to simply clear the way for an offensive on the part of the opposition that could lead to a democratic rupture."[81] This insightful remark reflects the mechanism I propose. Military leaders hoping to liberalize the regime delayed the removal of members of the armed forces from politics to stop the opposition from overreacting and usurping the regime. The guarantee regarding the military's status under the new government by political elites during the transition suggests that the new democratic leadership sought to appease the

[78] Juliano Saccomani, "Revolution, Not Transition: The Collapse of the Brazilian Military Regime," *The University of Chicago Revista Vaeranda*, March 23, 2023, https://voices.uchicago.edu/vaeranda/2023/03/23/revolution-not-transition-the-collapse-of-the-brazilian-military-regime/.
[79] Frances Hagopian and Scott Mainwaring, "Democracy in Brazil: Origins, Problems, Prospects," *Kellogg Institute For International Studies*, September 1987, https://kellogg.nd.edu/documents/1294.
[80] Codato, "A Political History of the Brazilian Transition from Military Dictatorship to Democracy."
[81] Codato, 16–17.

military and thus preserved the conciliatory mindset initially adopted by castellistas into the first nominal democratic administration in 1985.

Following the first democratic election after the removal of the military government, neither President José Sarney's new administration nor the military institution were strong enough to take full power, so they came to an agreement that involved the military cabinet which allowed Sarney to take office while placating military leaders so they would not attempt a coup.[82] Throughout his administration, the Minister of the Army and the Chief of the National Information Service—both Generals in the Brazilian military—became key political actors, often using the threat of a military coup as a bargaining chip toward their policy objectives. In the early years of the new republic—when the memory of the violent and repressive regime was fresh—these threats were effective given the heightened risk of falling back into military totalitarianism and thus President Sarney responded by giving the military a way to continue influencing policy through the Cabinet. These threats from the military lost effectiveness as Brazil progressed on its democratic path, which helps explain the steady decline in military ministers in Figure 1 there farther we get from the year of transition.[83] President José Sarney's Cabinet gave military leaders a platform to resolve issues within the military and helped a peaceful transition move forward.[84] This demonstrates that the new democratic leadership in Brazil used the Presidential Cabinet to appease hostile military leaders to make sure that the armed forces would step down quietly and would cooperate with the new government.

[82] Zirker, "The Military Ministers and Political Change in Post-Authoritarian Brazil."
[83] Zirker.
[84] Zirker.

6.2 Chile

Even though the military regime that ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990 was a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime just like the military government in Brazil, there are some stark differences between these two cases. In 1973, General Augusto Pinochet led a military coup against leftist President Salvador Allende, who had undertaken massive social and economic reforms since being elected to the presidency in 1970.[85] After the military coup, General Pinochet was named to the presidency and he subsequently dismantled Congress, banned left-wing political parties, and suspended elections.[86] Like Brazil, Chile was also characterized by severe repression, political violence, and human rights abuses at the hands of the military government during a similarly long regime. In both cases, political offices and bureaucratic posts were often filled by members of the armed forces. Additionally, the overthrow of a socialist, populist administration and the strong neoliberal reforms implemented by Pinochet reveal that the military regime in Chile was also right-wing and anti-populist.[87] However, unlike the Brazil case with its military apparatus, the power of the military government in Chile was centered on one figure: the dictator Augusto Pinochet who occupied the presidency for almost 20 years. The personalist nature of this regime means that Chile had a very different experience during its military authoritarian period than Brazil.

Despite this significant difference, Chile's democratic transition had a lot in common with the process in Brazil. Pinochet's regime also implemented limited liberalization measures intended

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[85] "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations: The Allende Years and the Pinochet Coup, 1969–1973," Office of the Historian, accessed April 25, 2024, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/allende.
[86] "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations: The Allende Years and the Pinochet Coup, 1969–1973."
[87] Rudiger Dornbusch and Sebastian Edwards, "The Socialist-Populist Chilean Experience, 1970-1973," *The Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America* (University of Chicago Press, 1991), https://www.nber.org/books-and-chapters/macroeconomics-populism-latin-america.

to cement their power and bolster support.[88] Pinochet held successful referendums on the question of military rule during his regime that crafted an appearance of popular support for his military government and institutionalized the military government through the approval of a new constitution in 1980.[89] In the early eighties, Pinochet slightly increased freedom of the press and even gave some political access to opposition groups in the face of massive protests against his regime.[90] Unlike in Brazil, these changes initially strengthened the Pinochet regime as the opposition remained fragmented while Pinochet maintained complete control of the government and of the military.[91] However, this strength motivated all dissenters to band together from the 1988 plebiscite. Having lost the referendum that allowed Chileans to vote on whether he should remain in power and facing international pressure for democratization, Pinochet stepped down after losing the support of military leadership.[92]

One reason that the military withdrew its support from Pinochet and allowed a transition to democracy is that they institutionalized military influence into the new democratic system of government. With the goal of political stability post-transition and fears of another military overthrow of a democratically-elected government in mind, the victorious opposition parties engaged in negotiations with military leadership over the terms of the 1989 constitutional reforms in order to conciliate the military and guarantee their support of the new democratic government.[93]

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[88] Shandra Bernath-Plaistad and Max Rennebohm, "Chileans Overthrow Pinochet Regime, 1983-1988," Global Nonviolent Action Database, July 9, 2011, https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/chileans-overthrow-pinochet-regime-1983-1988.
[89] Alejandro Olivares L., "Cabinet Formation in Chile," in *Survival of Ministers and Configuration of Cabinets in Chile and Uruguay*, ed. Alejandro Olivares L. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 65–109, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92802-5_4.
[90] Bernath-Plaistad and Rennebohm, "Chileans Overthrow Pinochet Regime, 1983-1988."
[91] Patrick S. Barrett, "The Limits of Democracy: Socio-Political Compromise and Regime Change in Post-Pinochet Chile," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 34, no. 3 (September 1, 1999): 3–36, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02687625.
[92] Barrett; Bernath-Plaistad and Rennebohm, "Chileans Overthrow Pinochet Regime, 1983-1988."
[93] Olivares L., "Cabinet Formation in Chile."

As a result of these negotiations, the new Chilean Republic had to contend with institutional mechanisms that cemented the influence over policy of military and authoritarian-period elites in the new democratic system such as designated senators, senators for life, an electoral system that made the two main political camps tie, and roadblocks to changing laws in Congress.[94] This means that the new democratic government made costly concessions that remained in place until 2021 to appease the military and prevent another coup after the first democratic election in two decades. However, these strategies adopted by the ruling coalition in the new republic did not leverage the Presidential Cabinet since no military ministers were appointed after 1990.

6.3 Findings

As democracies born out of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes with a violent history, there are two main factors that set the cases of Brazil and Chile apart. The first is the approach to democratization adopted by political elites during the transitional period. While Brazilian elites opted for more informal channels such as a promised "privileged status" and Cabinet appointments at the discretion of the president, the military elite in Chile formalized their channels of influence by limiting Constitutional reforms. According to Olivares 2022, "In the beginning of democratic governments, the fear of repeating the experience of the Unidad Popular marked the decision-making process."[95] Even though the new democratically-elected administration in both Brazil and Chile sought to mitigate the risk of another coup by providing the military with channels for political influence in order to appease their policy interests and concerns, only one of these cases made use of the Presidential Cabinet to achieve their goals. Consequently, these case studies provide support for the mechanism underlying the proposed theory about the role of the Cabinet

[94] Olivares L.
[95] Olivares L., 93.

in transitions to democracy but suggest that many strategies can be adopted to appease the military beyond Cabinets. They also reveal a potential avenue for future research that focuses on the processes of democratic transition rather than authoritarian regime type.

Another significant difference between Brazil and Chile is that Pinochet's personalist regime operated differently than the military apparatus at the head of the Brazilian government. Even though both authoritarian periods were marked by state repression and political violence, the image of a brutal dictator is different than that of a national institution that historically saw itself as the protector of the people gaining too much power. As a result, political elites in Chile might have opted to keep the military out of the executive branch out of fears of abuse of executive power and since alliances between the military support and pull among the political elite has been found to increase the risk of a military coup. However, this question regarding the impact of personalist leadership is beyond the scope of this thesis and should be studied separately.

7 Discussion

Through various empirical tests and a case study analysis, I find mixed results for the proposed theory. For Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, the presence of military officials in the Presidential Cabinet follows a pattern consistent with the claim that most military leaders were removed from the executive branch after democratization but Cabinet appointments could have been used sparingly as a tool to appease military demands, which therefore allowed the military to hold on to executive power and delay a full removal. The time trends for coup risk also show that fear of military intervention continued to be a problem into the democratic period and therefore supports the idea that this was a salient consideration for political leaders of the time. The empirical investigation yields some evidence of a positive relationship between the proportion of military

ministers and coup risk, with a positive and statistically significant β_1 in Table 1. Once the interaction term is introduced, it is clear that this pattern mostly comes from the authoritarian period. This matches the expectation that when a military regime feels threatened by opposing factions or civilian groups, they will appoint more military ministers to address this heightened risk and therefore provides support for the proposed mechanism that Presidential Cabinet appointments can be used to placate disgruntled opponents within the military.

Nevertheless, the statistical evidence presented in Table 2 does not prove this causal mechanism. In fact, the positive relationship between military ministers and coup risk could instead be due to reverse causality, even if one of the robustness checks partly addresses these concerns. It could be the case that when there are more military leaders in a Presidential Cabinet, the risk of a coup is greater. On the one hand, the risk of a coup is greater during the turbulent authoritarian period before the transitions to democracy according to Figure 2, and those regimes were composed of military officials so β_1 could be interpreted to illustrate that there were more military ministers in office during the military regimes that inherently faced higher coup risks. On the other hand, some scholars argue that coup risk is greater when the perceived chance of success is greater, which is the case when dissenters have allies in the political and business elites and when a recent coup has been successful.[96] This means that having more ministers with military titles in the Presidential Cabinet could increase the risk of a military coup by giving a military faction a stronghold in the government and connecting them with other members of the military elite. More research that directly tests the causal direction of this relationship is necessary to gain a better understanding of the relationship between military ministers and coup risk.

[96] Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America."

The case of Brazil provides some evidence in support of this theory and the main hypothesis. This is an explicit example where the Sarney administration appointed members of the armed forces to the Presidential Cabinet in order to give military officials an opportunity to continue influencing policy under the new democratic government to mitigate the coup threats made by these military leaders. However, there is overall insufficient evidence for my main hypothesis (H_1) or to suggest that this theory is generalizable beyond the case of Brazil. The results in Table 3 show that after the transition to democracy, the relationship between military ministers and coup risk loses statistical significance. Additionally, the interaction model suggests a negative relationship between the proportion of ministers with a military title and coup risk post transition. This is evidence for the opposite effect than predicted by H_1 and might suggest that democratic presidents want to keep military officers out of the executive branch—especially when coup risk is heightened—because giving the military access to a powerful political office could leave the government vulnerable to dangerous military influences or embolden military factions considering a coup by granting them access to the political elite. It thus follows that a negative relationship between military ministers and coup risk could suggest that during periods of heightened coup risk, presidents will want to remove military influences from their Cabinet and cut off that importance source of power and confidence of success. All in all, both of these models indicate that further research that collects data for a longer period of time after transition is necessary to better understand how presidents use their Cabinet to respond to threats of military coups during democratic periods. It could also be the case that military appointments to Presidential Cabinets are so rare in democratic polities and that coup risk varies so little after the transition that other measures for these phenomena or other models to analyze this relationship would be more insightful.

In addition to calling attention to important differences between the cases selected for this investigation, the Chile example also casts doubt on the main hypothesis. This case study reveals that even when democratic presidents allow military leaders access to the political arena in order to appease their desire to influence governance with the goal of preventing another military coup, there are many other strategies they can adopt and other institutions they can take advantage of outside of the Presidential Cabinet. This finding could inspire more studies that focus on alternative approaches Latin American presidents have taken to keep the military in check since the third wave of democratization. It also illuminates another potential avenue for future research that investigates the relationship between the degree of political influence members of the military have—whether that is through the Presidential Cabinet or through other institutions—and coup risk.

8 Conclusion

In this investigation of the role Presidential Cabinets play in conciliating the armed forces after a transition from a military regime to a democratic government and of the relationship between the proportion of military ministers and coup risk, I find conflicting results. The empirical models suggest that while there does appear to be a positive relationship between the proportion of military ministers and coup risk during the military dictatorships of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, there is some evidence that the relationship between these two factors is reversed in democratic systems, which is the opposite effect as predicted by the principal hypothesis. However, concerns over reverse causality and insufficient data preclude me from making causal claims from these relationships. The Brazil and Chile case studies demonstrate that presidents can appease the military over concerns for a possible coup in very different ways that can leverage the Presidential Cabinet or other institutional channels of political access.

These findings expose just how complicated presidents' responses to threats of military intervention are. Under certain circumstances, heightened coup risk can push a president to make concessions and grant political power to military leaders while in others it can spark fears of military interference in government and lead a chief executive to clear their Cabinet of such influences. Despite these complexities and mixed results, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that in some cases, the Presidential Cabinet has the potential to act as a tool for placating the military's desire for political access after the removal of a military government. This outcome can potentially generate other inquiries into whether the Cabinet played this role in national contexts outside of the four bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes.

Understanding the ways that new democratic governments mitigate the risk of another military coup to promote democratic stability as well as the concessions presidents make to assure the military accepts the new political system is essential as scholars continue to ask what institutional weaknesses contribute to the modern democratic crisis in Latin America. The Constitution enacted by Pinochet in 1980 and amended in 1989 was not revised until 2021.[97] The military continues to be heavily involved in Brazilian politics through both formal and informal channels, most notably over the past decade as election observers, organizers of Jair Bolsonaro's campaign, and even in appointed judicial and executive offices.[98] Clearly, the compromises made during democratic transitions to assuage threats of military intervention had a lasting impact and continue to affect the democratic quality of these countries. Even though this study only focuses on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, countries all around the region are grappling with similar issues after long histories of authoritarian struggles. To combat the rising tide of executive

[97] Olivares L., "Cabinet Formation in Chile."
[98] "The Military's Return to Brazilian Politics," Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, March 14, 2022, https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-50-brazil-armed-forces/.

aggrandizement impacting countless people in Latin America, it is critical to consider all the different avenues for authoritarian slips or undemocratic interventions, including the complex, dynamic, and understudied mechanisms behind the scenes of Presidential Cabinets.

9 Appendix

Table A1: Minister Counts by Year and Country

Year	Ministers	Military Ministers
Argentina		
1974	8	1
1975	8	0
1976	8	6
1977	9	7
1978	9	7
1979	8	5
1980	8	5
1981	13	8
1982	10	1
1983	10	1
1984	8	0
1985	8	0
1986	8	0
1987	8	0
1988	8	0
1989	8	0
1990	8	0
1991	8	0
1992	8	0
1993	8	0
1994	8	0
1995	8	0
1996	9	0
1997	9	0
1998	9	0
1999	9	0
2000	11	1
2001	10	1
2002	12	0
2003	11	0
Brazil		
1975	17	8
1976	17	8
1977	17	9
1978	17	8
1979	18	7
1980	18	7
1981	17	8
1982	17	8
1983	17	7
1984	17	8
1985	23	4

Table A1: Minister Counts by Year and Country

Year	Ministers	Military Ministers
1986	22	5
1987	30	5
1988	23	5
1989	20	3
1990	12	4
1991	12	4
1992	15	4
1993	20	3
1994	20	5
1995	20	3
1996	22	3
1997	22	3
1998	23	3
1999	20	0
2000	20	0
2001	20	0
2002	20	1
2003	23	0
2004	23	0
2005	22	0
Chile		
1980	17	8
1981	17	9
1982	17	10
1983	17	8
1984	16	4
1985	16	4
1986	16	4
1987	16	5
1988	16	5
1989	16	6
1990	16	0
1991	18	0
1992	18	0
1993	18	0
1994	18	0
1995	17	0
1996	19	0
1997	19	0
1998	19	0
1999	19	0
2000	16	0
2001	16	0

Table A1: Minister Counts by Year and Country

Year	Ministers	Military Ministers
2002	17	0
2003	17	0
2004	17	0
2005	17	0
2006	19	0
2007	21	0
2008	21	0
2009	21	0
2010	22	0
Uruguay		
1974	13	1
1975	12	1
1976	12	1
1977	12	2
1978	12	2
1979	12	2
1980	12	2
1981	12	2
1982	12	2
1983	12	2
1984	13	2
1985	12	0
1986	13	0
1987	13	0
1988	13	1
1989	13	1
1990	12	0
1991	12	0
1992	12	0
1993	12	0
1994	12	0
1995	12	0
1996	12	0
1997	11	0
1998	12	0
1999	12	0
2000	12	0
2001	14	0
2002	14	0
2003	11	0
2004	12	0

Table A2: Minister Counts by Administration

Year	Administration	Duration	Total Appointments: Ministers	Total Appointments: Military Ministers	Yearly Averages: Ministers	Yearly Averages: Military Ministers
Argentina						
1974	Maria Estela Martinez De Peron	2	14	1	8	0
1976	Jorge Rafael Videla	5	18	13	8	6
1981	Roberto Eduardo Viola	1	12	7	13	8
1982	Reynaldo Bignone	2	11	1	10	1
1984	Raul Alfonsin	5	21	0	8	0
1989	Carlos Saul Menem	11	34	0	8	0
2000	Fernando De La Rua	2	19	1	10	1
2002	Eduardo Duhalde	1	11	0	12	0
2003	Nestor Kirchner	1	11	0	11	0
Brazil						
1974	Ernesto Geisel	4	20	10	17	8
1979	Joao Baptista De Oliveira Figueiredo	6	29	10	17	8
1985	Jose Sarney Costa	5	52	5	24	4
1990	Fernando Collor De Mello	3	25	6	13	4
1993	Itamar Franco	2	36	5	20	4
1995	Fernando Henrique Cardoso	8	69	5	21	2
2003	Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva	3	29	0	23	0
Chile						
1974	Augusto Pinochet Ugarte	10	73	30	16	6
1990	Patricio Aylwin Azocar	4	23	0	18	0
1994	Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle	6	38	0	18	0
2000	Ricardo Lagos Escobar	6	35	0	17	0
2006	Michelle Bachelet Jeria	4	39	0	20	0
2010	Sebastian Pinera Echenique	1	22	0	22	0
Uruguay						
1972	Juan Maria Bordaberry Arocena	2	12	1	12	1
1976	Alberto Demicheli	1	11	1	12	1
1977	Aparicio Mendez Manfredini	5	19	4	12	2
1982	Gregorio Alvarez	3	22	5	12	2
1985	Julio Maria Sanguinetti	10	38	1	12	0
1990	Luis Alberto Lacalle	5	26	0	12	0
2000	Jorge Batlle	5	25	0	13	0

Table A3: Alternative Coding of Military Status Robustness Check

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Coup Risk	0.07*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)
Coup Risk x Post-Transition				−0.12*** (0.02)
Num.Obs.	101	101	101	101
R2	0.207	0.363	0.731	0.822
Country Fixed Effects	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes

The proportion of military ministers is the number of ministers who have the rank of a military officer, graduated from military school, or have received military honors divided by the total number of ministers in a Cabinet at the year-country level. Coup risk is an index calculated equally from the involvement in civil society, a regime legitimacy index, and history with coups. Controls include leader ideology and whether the leader was a part of the military.

Table A4: Alternative Coding of Coup Risk Robustness Check: Years Since Last Coup

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Years Since Last Coup	0.004+ (0.002)	0.02*** (0.003)	0.006* (0.003)	0.02*** (0.004)	−0.005*** (0.001)	−0.007*** (0.001)
Years Since Coup x Post-Transition				−0.02*** (0.003)		
Num.Obs.	101	101	101	101	58	58
R2	0.035	0.432	0.671	0.780	0.234	0.407
Country Fixed Effects	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Post-Transition Only	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

The proportion of military ministers is the number of ministers with the rank of a military officer divided by the total number of ministers in a Cabinet at the year-country level. Coup risk is measured as the negative number of years since the last coup to reflect that lower numbers reflect lower coup risk. Controls include leader ideology and whether the leader was a part of the military.

Table A5: Alternative Coding of Coup Risk Robustness Check: Previous Year's Coup Risk

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Previous Coup Risk	0.07*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.005 (0.009)	0.03* (0.01)
Previous Coup Risk x Post-Transition				−0.12*** (0.02)		
Num.Obs.	101	101	101	101	62	62
R2	0.205	0.347	0.691	0.794	0.005	0.157
Country Fixed Effects	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Post-Transition Only	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

The proportion of military ministers is the number of ministers with the rank of a military officer divided by the total number of ministers in a Cabinet at the year-country level. Coup risk is the the previous year's coup risk. Controls include leader ideology and whether the leader was a part of the military.

Figure A1: Proportion of Military Ministers by Country

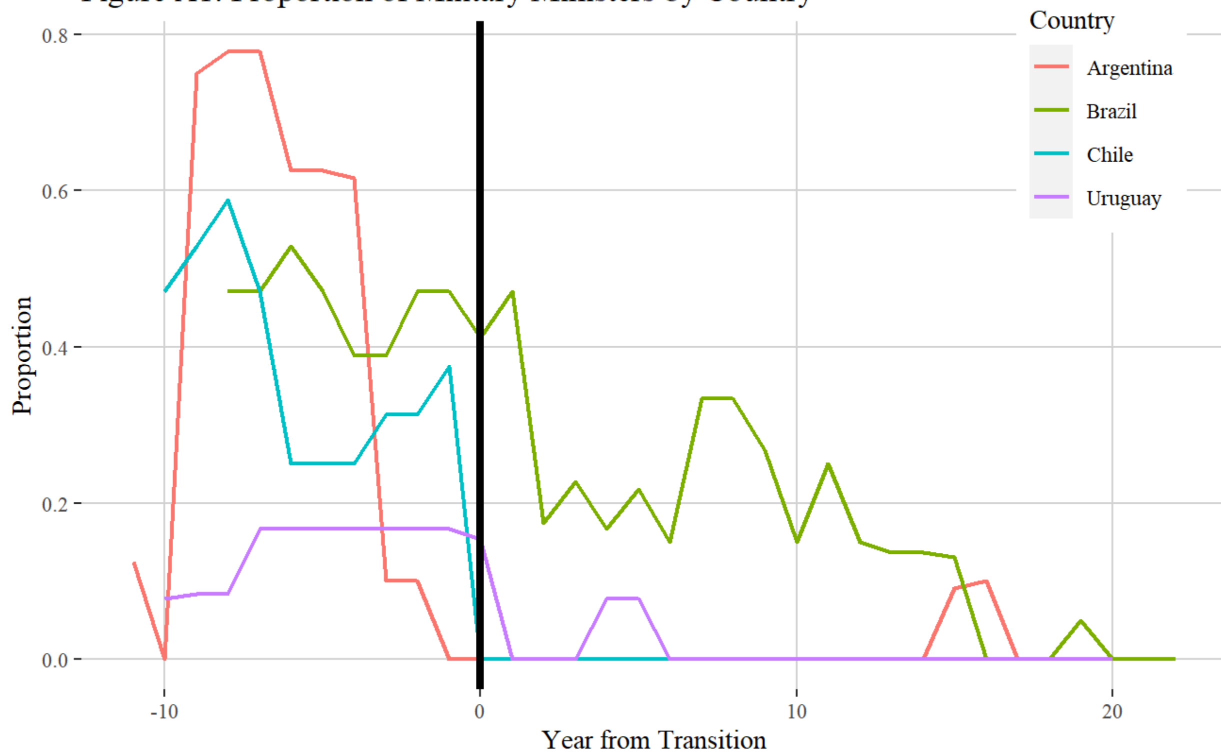


Figure A2: Coup Risk by Country

Figure A3: Coup Risk and Military Ministers by Country

Figure A4: Main Model Residual Plot

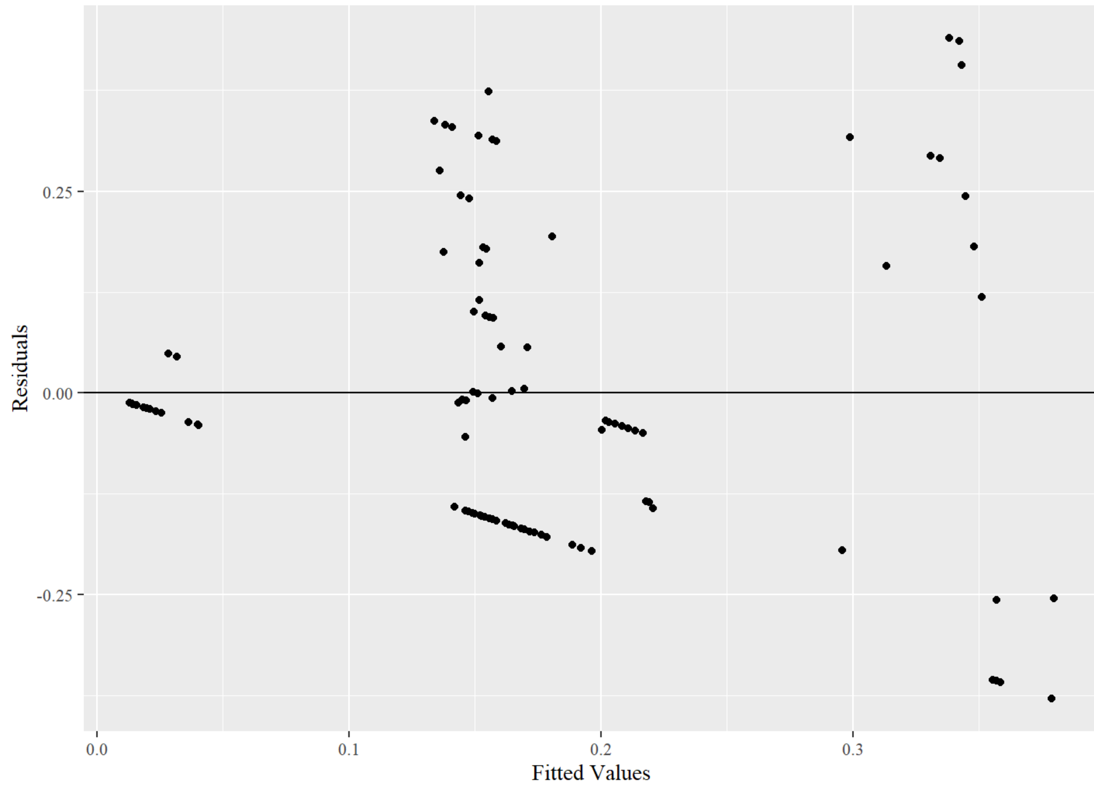
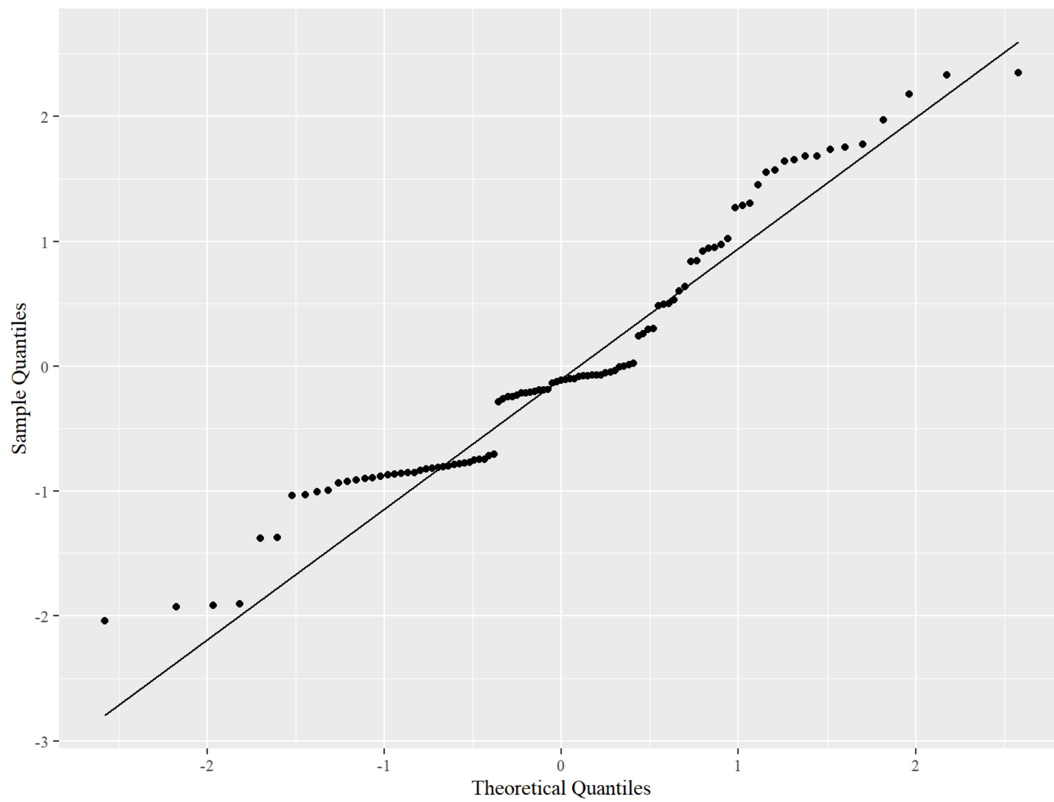


Figure A5: Main Model Residuals QQ Plot



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