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Article

Call of Duty or Mission Creep? The militarization of presidential cabinets in Brazil, 1946–2024

Octavio Amorim Neto [1] *

Igor Acácio [2]

* Corresponding Author

[1] Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV EBAPE), Escola Brasileira de Administração Pública e de Empresas, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

[2] California State University, Fullerton, Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice, Fullerton, CA, United States of America

Abstract

The appointment of military officers to cabinet positions is a distinctive feature of Brazilian politics, though its intensity varies across presidencies and regimes. What are the determinants and consequences of cabinet militarization? This article examines the appointment and influence of Armed Forces officers in Brazilian presidential cabinets from 1946 to 2024, focusing on portfolios with no statutory requirement to be held by the military. Drawing on an original dataset containing all ministerial appointments during this period, the article addresses three core questions: (1) Under what conditions are military officers appointed to the cabinet? (2) Do these officers remain in office longer than their civilian counterparts? (3) What are the budgetary consequences of appointing military officers to civilian portfolios? To answer them, the study employs several statistical models, paying special attention to the democratic regime in place since 1985. The results show that military officers are more likely to be appointed when presidents face greater needs to form and sustain legislative coalitions. Between 1946 and 2024, officers tended to stay in office longer than civilian ministers and were associated with higher spending in the ministries they headed. Under the current democratic regime, however, some of these patterns have reversed: although military officers continue to be appointed by presidents facing fragmented legislatures, military-led ministries spend less than those headed by civilians. These findings shed light on the evolving

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political and administrative roles of the Armed Forces in Brazil, contributing to broader debates on civil-military relations and coalitional presidentialism.
Keywords: civil-military relations, presidential cabinets, military appointments, presidentialism, Brazil, public spending, ministerial tenure, authoritarianism, democratization.

O dever chama ou a missão se expande? A militarização dos gabinetes presidenciais no Brasil, 1946–2024

Resumo

A nomeação de militares para cargos ministeriais é um traço distintivo da política brasileira, embora sua intensidade varie por presidências e regimes. Quais são os determinantes e as consequências da militarização do gabinete? Este artigo examina a nomeação e a influência de oficiais das Forças Armadas nos gabinetes presidenciais brasileiros de 1946 a 2024, com foco em pastas que não têm requisito legal de serem ocupadas por militares. A partir de um banco de dados original com todas as nomeações ministeriais do período, o artigo responde a três questões centrais: (1) Sob quais condições os militares são nomeados para o gabinete? (2) Esses oficiais permanecem no cargo por mais tempo do que seus pares civis? (3) Quais são as consequências orçamentárias da nomeação de militares para pastas civis? Para respondê-las, o estudo emprega diversos modelos estatísticos, com atenção especial ao regime democrático vigente desde 1985. Os resultados mostram que militares têm maior probabilidade de serem nomeados quando os presidentes enfrentam maiores necessidades de formar e sustentar coalizões legislativas. Entre 1946 e 2024, os oficiais tenderam a permanecer mais tempo no cargo do que os ministros civis e estiveram associados a maiores gastos nos ministérios que dirigiram. Sob o atual regime democrático, contudo, alguns desses padrões se inverteram: conquanto os militares continuem a ser nomeados por presidentes que enfrentam legislativos fragmentados, os ministérios chefiados por militares gastam menos do que os chefiados por civis. Esses achados lançam luz sobre a evolução dos papéis políticos e administrativos das Forças Armadas no Brasil, contribuindo para debates mais amplos sobre as relações civis-militares e o presidencialismo de coalizão.
Palavras-chave: relações civis-militares, gabinetes presidenciais, nomeações militares, presidencialismo, Brasil, gasto público, duração ministerial, autoritarismo, democratização.

¿El deber llama o la misión se expande? La militarización de los gabinetes presidenciales en Brasil, 1946–2024

Resumen

El nombramiento de militares para cargos ministeriales es un rasgo distintivo de la política brasileña, aunque su intensidad varía entre presidencias y regímenes. ¿Cuáles son los determinantes y las consecuencias de la militarización del gabinete? Este artículo examina el nombramiento y la influencia de oficiales de las Fuerzas Armadas en los gabinetes presidenciales brasileños de 1946 a 2024, centrándose en carteras que no tienen el requisito legal de ser ocupadas por militares. A partir de una base de datos original con todos los nombramientos ministeriales del período, el artículo responde a tres preguntas centrales: (1) ¿Bajo qué condiciones se nombra a militares para el gabinete? (2) ¿Permanecen estos oficiales en el cargo más tiempo que sus pares civiles? (3) ¿Cuáles son las consecuencias presupuestarias del nombramiento de militares para carteras civiles? Para responderlas, el estudio emplea diversos modelos estadísticos, prestando especial atención al régimen democrático vigente desde 1985. Los resultados muestran que los militares tienen una mayor probabilidad de ser nombrados cuando los presidentes enfrentan mayores necesidades de formar y sostener coaliciones legislativas. Entre 1946 y 2024, los oficiales tendieron a permanecer más tiempo en el cargo que los ministros civiles y estuvieron asociados con un mayor gasto en los ministerios que dirigieron. Bajo el actual régimen democrático, sin embargo, algunos de estos patrones se han invertido: si bien los militares continúan siendo nombrados por presidentes que enfrentan legislativos fragmentados, los ministerios encabezados por militares gastan menos que los encabezados por civiles. Estos hallazgos arrojan luz sobre la evolución de los roles políticos y administrativos de las Fuerzas Armadas en Brasil, contribuyendo a debates más amplios sobre las relaciones civiles-militares y el presidencialismo de coalición.
Palabras clave: relaciones civiles-militares, gabinetes presidenciales, nombramientos militares, presidencialismo, Brasil, gasto público, duración ministerial, autoritarismo, democratización.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the onset of the republican regime in Brazil in the late 19th century, the presence of the military in domestic politics has been one of the defining features of the country's history. However, between 1999, the year the Ministry of Defense was created, and 2015, the military's political role shrank to its lowest level since the coup d'état that had toppled the monarchy in 1889. Political scientists praised this achievement (Bruneau & Tollefson, 2014, p. 119; D'Araújo, 2010, pp. 122–123). Much to their dismay, the military conspicuously re-emerged at the center of Brazilian politics in 2016–2023, that is, under the presidencies of Michel Temer (2016–2019) and Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2023) (Akkoyunlu & Lima, 2022).

The roles the military plays in domestic politics in Brazil and across Latin America are many. They can range from repression of social movements and upheavals, urban policing, fighting drug trafficking, occupying far-flung depopulated areas of the national territory, infrastructure development, implementation of social policies, running state-owned enterprises, controlling air traffic, holding cabinet and subcabinet positions in civilian administrations, to ostensibly governing the country in full dictatorial mode (Carvalho, 2005; D'Araújo & Rezende, 2024a, 2024b).

In this article, we focus on the presence of military officers in cabinet-level positions not statutorily reserved for them. This presence has persisted across regimes, raising important questions about why these appointments occur, what consequences they entail, and whether the armed forces' return to politics is an indicator of autocratization or democratic backsliding. Moreover, cabinet positions are the summit of executive power. No wonder the share of military officers holding cabinet posts is a key measure of the military's political power (Amorim Neto & Acácio, 2025; Beliakova, 2021; White, 2017). Furthermore, by investigating cabinet militarization, we can connect the study of military politics to the scholarship on presidentialism and executive politics in Brazil.

That said, this paper investigates the causes and consequences of appointing military officers to Brazil's presidential cabinets between 1946 and 2024. By drawing on an original dataset of over 800 ministry-year observations across ministries, we test three core hypotheses. First, we examine whether military officers are more likely to be appointed under politically weak presidents. Second, we assess whether military ministers remain in office longer than their civilian counterparts. Third, we analyze the budgetary impact of military-led ministries, asking whether they are associated with increased or decreased public spending. Our findings indicate that military ministers are more common when presidents face greater coalitional necessities, that they tend to serve longer tenures during the full period from 1946 to 2024, and that these ministers are associated with divergent fiscal consequences depending on the regime. Beyond the regression results, one of the article's descriptive contributions is a ministry-level breakdown of military appointments across three regimes, which reveals that the Transportation and Infrastructure portfolio is the only one militarized under all three regimes. At the same time, overall patterns of militarization vary substantially across policy domains and historical periods.

The article is organized as follows. The second section briefly reviews the evolving political role of the military in Brazil since 1946 and the literature on the selection of military officers for cabinet portfolios. The third section presents our theoretical framework and hypotheses. The fourth section describes our data and methods. The fifth section addresses the political and institutional

conditions under which military officers are appointed to civilian cabinet positions. The sixth section analyzes the tenure in office of military ministers *vis-à-vis* their civilian counterparts. The seventh section evaluates the budgetary consequences of military ministers. The last section presents our conclusions.

1.1 The Evolving Political Role of the Brazilian Military since 1946

Between 1946 and 2024, Brazil experienced three political regimes: democracy in 1946–1964, military rule in 1964–1985, and democracy again since 1985.[1] Interestingly, the country's formal institutional structure remained largely unchanged over those 80 years. This structure consists of presidentialism (except for a brief semi-presidential interval in 1961–1963), bicameralism, federalism, and the electoral systems for the Chamber of Deputies (proportional representation) and the Senate (majority rule). In contrast, throughout those eight decades, there were different party systems, ample variation in the political power of the armed forces, oscillating degrees of policymaking centralization in the hands of the national executive, elections with different levels of competitiveness, freedom, and fairness, and national and subnational legislatures and courts with fluctuating degrees of autonomy and clout.

The democratic regime begun in 1946 was a watershed in Brazilian history. For the first time since the establishment of the Republic in 1889, elections were contested by nationally and ideologically oriented political parties. Executive-legislative relations were conducted through a governing formula that would later be labeled coalitional presidentialism (Abranches, 1988). State governments became relevant again after their demise in 1937–1945.

The armed forces continued to play a central role in national politics, stipulated by the 1946 Constitution itself in Article 177, which determined that the armed forces are intended to "defend the Homeland and guarantee the constitutional powers, the law, and order." The Cold War also contributed to the expansion of the military's political role, as US foreign policy openly advocated deploying Third World armed forces to quell leftist movements. Consequently, these armies focused their national security doctrines on the fight against communism or the internal enemy (Alves, 1985).

Under the 1946–1964 democratic regime, the barracks always counted on at least three military ministers sitting around the cabinet table (which had 14 seats at the most) but also frequently undertook direct political action by means of manifestos, "pronunciamentos", vetoes on policy measures and political leaders, conspiracies, attempted coups, countercoups, and uprisings (Fico, 2025, pp. 237-366).

A complex combination of factors — including growing legislative fragmentation, ideological radicalization, governmental instability, and decision-making paralysis (Santos, 1986) — led to the coup d'état of March 31, 1964, which, in turn, paved the way for 21 years of military rule. Seventy-five years after the monarchy's downfall in 1889, the military became the hegemonic force in Brazilian politics.

[1] Throughout this paper we use "military rule" or "military regime" to refer to the 1964–1985 period, and "authoritarian" only as an adjectival modifier where analytically appropriate. We also treat both democratic periods (1946–1964 and 1985–present) as formally democratic based on their constitutional and electoral features, while acknowledging that the first democratic period was characterized by significant restrictions on party competition and suffrage that distinguish it from the post-1985 regime. The V-Dem index included in all models captures this cross-period variation empirically.

In 1985, Brazil transitioned to democracy. In 1988, a new constitution was promulgated by a Constituent Assembly elected in 1986. Since 1989, the country has held 9 presidential elections. Since 1990, Brazil has been electing some of the most fragmented legislatures in the world (Nicolau, 2017), which, in turn, incentivize presidents to form heterogeneous coalitions to muster legislative majorities. The 1988 Constitution grants the chief executive ample legislative, appointment, and budgetary powers (Figueiredo & Limongi, 1999). However, since the late 2010s, Congress's lawmaking ability has grown at the expense of the executive's (Almeida, 2023; Rey, 2023). Likewise, since 2015, legislators have been amassing greater control over the national budget (Faria, 2023).

As for the military, Article 142 of the 1988 Constitution stipulates that the armed forces are intended for the defense of the Nation, the guarantee of constitutional powers, and, at the initiative of any of these, the maintenance of law and order. Between 1985 and 2015, there was significant, albeit slow, progress in terms of civilian control over the military, particularly after the creation of the Ministry of Defense in 1999 (D'Araújo, 2010, pp. 107-123). However, the military continued to wield extensive prerogatives in defense policymaking, public security, infrastructure development, and public administration (Cortinhas & Vitelli, 2021; Duarte, 2025; Mathias & Guzzi, 2010; Zaverucha, 2000).

Surprisingly, there was a rapid erosion of civilian control since Michel Temer came to power in the wake of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment in 2016 (Penido et al., 2023). In February 2018, President Temer appointed retired Army General Joaquim Silva e Luna as the first military officer to head the defense portfolio since 1999. Under Temer, there was also a tweet from the Army Commander in April 2018, putting pressure on the Supreme Federal Court on the eve of the judgment in the habeas corpus filed by former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who would later go to jail.

Erosion of civilian control, politicization of the military, and militarization of cabinet and subcabinet appointments were distinctive features of the presidency of former Army Captain Jair Bolsonaro in 2019–2023 (Bauer et al., 2025; Couto, 2021; Passos, 2021). In 2022, Bolsonaro's reelection bid was defeated by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a center-left politician. Bolsonaro attempted to subvert this election result by overt and covert means but failed. On January 8th, 2023, already under Lula da Silva's presidency, Bolsonaro supporters physically assaulted the seats of Congress, the Presidency, and the Supreme Court with the participation or tolerance of active-duty and retired military officers (Novaes & Arguelhes, 2024). Lula da Silva, elected on a platform that promised to restore democracy, appointed a conservative politician, José Múcio, to head the Ministry of Defense, and demilitarized his cabinet. The only military officer he appointed to a cabinet-rank position was the head of the Institutional Security Office.

While there are mountains of scholarly articles and books on the political role played by the Brazilian military since the end of World War II and plenty of works on patterns of cabinet appointments and survival in Brazil (due to space limits, we will not reference these numerous works here), there are fewer studies systematizing data on the recruitment of officers to cabinet portfolios across the three political regimes the country has had since then. Druckman and Vaurio (1983) show that the appointment of generals varied systematically by administration, with "internationalist" presidents (such as Castello Branco, Geisel, and Figueiredo) favoring officers with US training/prior deployment and technical experience. Nunes (1997, pp. 80-94) presents data on the frequency of ministers with military background per presidency in 1946–1982 to differentiate between political and technocratic criteria of cabinet appointments. Amorim Neto (2011, pp. 113-167; 2015) calculates the annual percentage of military ministers (retired or on active duty) in 1946–2010 as an indicator

of the political power of the armed forces. This author uses this percentage as one of the explanatory variables of Brazil's foreign policy orientation. More recently, Amorim Neto and Acácio (2025) also estimate the yearly share of military officers in presidential cabinets in 1946–2022 to identify its causes and consequences for the quality of democracy, defense policymaking, legislative control of the armed forces, and defense spending.

The aforementioned works aggregate the civilian portfolios held by military officers with the typically military ministries found in Brazil (Ministry of the Army, Ministry of the Navy, Ministry of the Air Force; Military Office of the Presidency; National Intelligence System; Joint Staff of the Armed Forces, and Institutional Security Office). Here, our approach is different: we are mostly concerned with the causes and consequences of the appointment of military officers to civilian ministries (or non-military-related portfolios). Thus, this article makes a novel contribution by systematically investigating the drivers and effects of appointing military personnel solely to civilian ministries. It is precisely by holding civilian positions that the military considerably enhances its political clout. Holding only military-related positions surely gives the barracks a quantum of political power. However, it is by going beyond these positions that the armed forces entrench their influence within a political system. This is why it is relevant to analyze the causes and consequences of military appointments to civilian portfolios.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Our analysis is guided by three central questions: (1) Under what conditions are military officers appointed to the cabinet? (2) Do these officers remain in office longer than civilian ministers? (3) What are the policy consequences of appointing military officers to cabinet positions? These questions correspond to three distinct dependent variables: a binary indicator of whether a military officer is appointed to a ministry each year (RQ_1), the number of days a minister remains in office and their hazard rate of exit (RQ_2), and the share of each ministry in total cabinet expenditures (RQ_3).

Two overarching theoretical logics help explain the appointment and consequences of military officers in the cabinet. The first relates to coalitional necessities. In multiparty presidential systems like Brazil's, presidents must build and maintain legislative coalitions to govern effectively. Cabinet appointments are often used as tools to obtain legislative support, distribute resources, or signal policy commitments.[2] When presidents face dire coalitional necessities — manifested in fragmented legislatures and relatively small presidential parties — they may turn to the military as a loyal or technocratic alternative to partisan ministers. Officers may also be brought in because they symbolically or physically signal the armed forces' support for the president's policy agenda. This gives rise to our first hypothesis:

- **H_1 (Coalitional Necessity Hypothesis):** The greater the president's coalitional necessities, the more chief executives will appoint officers to cabinet posts not statutorily reserved for members of the armed forces.

[2] There are many works on cabinet politics in Brazil. Due to space limits, we refer readers to the recent article by Inácio and Pinheiro (2022), which reviews the extensive scholarship on this topic.

It is worth making explicit what this hypothesis implies: for military appointments to function as a substitute for partisan ministers, the armed forces must themselves be a politically relevant actor whose institutional backing carries weight within the civilian political arena. Recent contributions by scholars such as Beliakova (2021), Bauer et al. (2025), and Amorim Neto and Acácio (2025) have shown that military participation in tasks typically performed by civilians is not merely a residual feature of authoritarian legacies but a recurring dynamic shaped by political incentives. Cabinet appointments to civilian ministries are the most visible expression of a deeper process of government militarization — the gradual expansion of military roles into civilian policy domains, as described by Duarte (2025). By connecting this literature to works on coalition management, we treat cabinet appointments as both a symptom of presidential vulnerability and a vector enabling mission creep.

This article's use of "call of duty" and "mission creep" in the title seeks to capture these two distinct dynamics. We use "call of duty" to refer to presidents' recruitment of military officers for posts not statutorily reserved for military officers in response to the chief executive's political necessity: the moment at which presidents summon the armed forces for tasks that exceed their institutional mandate for the sake of governmental survival or administrative efficacy. "Mission creep" (Adams & Murray, 2014), by contrast, refers to the gradual institutional expansion that follows: as officers accumulate administrative experience in civilian ministries and build policy networks outside their core defense function, the boundary between military and civilian roles erodes, with lasting consequences for civilian control and the quality of democracy. These dynamics can operate sequentially or simultaneously, and their interaction is one of the elements that make cabinet militarization consequential beyond any single administration.

We note that, in appointing officers, politically weak presidents seek to govern around parties. Military officers are then filling slots vacated by unreliable or incompetent partisan ministers. Military ministers in civilian portfolios are thus symptoms of a breakdown in the normal logic of cabinet formation, whereby presidents leverage their commander-in-chief role to select cabinet members who can bestow on the executive branch the symbolic — or real — endorsement of the barracks, with all its potential benefits in the public eye.

The second set of expectations concerns the tenure of ministers who are members of the armed forces. On the one hand, military officers may enjoy longer tenures due to their support within the barracks, managerial expertise, or perceived non-partisan competence, particularly under authoritarian regimes (Remmer, 1989). On the other hand, under democratic conditions — especially in the post-1984 period — such appointments may be more politically contentious and temporary, particularly when used in crises or for signaling purposes (for example, to signal the government's commitment to law and order). We thus propose:

- **H_2 (Stability Hypothesis):** Military ministers are likely to remain in office longer than civilian ministers.
- **H_{2b} (Democratic Moderation Hypothesis):** In the current democratic period (1985–2024), officers are not more likely to remain in office than civilians.

Finally, we consider the fiscal impact of appointing military officers to cabinet portfolios. Here, we suggest two competing mechanisms: one leading to higher expenditures and another to lower expenditures.

The first is the organizational interests or effective lobbying hypothesis, which holds that military officers may secure greater resources for their ministries by leveraging insider status or invoking national security imperatives (Pion-Berlin, 2001).

The second is the austerity hypothesis. While in military-related areas officers may leverage their clout and mystique to obtain more resources, officers would have no direct constituency to serve in other areas. Therefore, presidents bent on deterring spending-boosting demands may appoint military officers to emphasize austerity, order, and hierarchy. A recent example illustrates this point: by appointing General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, who would last 7 months in the cabinet, to lead Brazil's high-profile Investment Partnerships Program, then President Bolsonaro strategically positioned a military figure in a key economic role to signal a break from traditional political patronage and corruption-laden schemes, instead foregrounding the military's reputation for discipline, integrity, and efficiency (Carvalho, 2018). In other words, military ministers heading civilian portfolios may be less inclined to use discretionary budgets for political gain or constituency service.

These competing expectations motivate our final hypotheses:

- **H_3 (Effective Lobbying Hypothesis):** Military ministers are associated with higher ministry expenditures.
- **H_{3b} (Austerity Hypothesis):** Military ministers are associated with lower ministry expenditures.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study draws on an original dataset covering all cabinet appointments in Brazil between 1946 and 2024. Table 3 in the appendix presents the descriptive statistics of the variables used in the statistical models for this paper. Each minister is coded by name, ministry, start and end dates, and whether they have a military background (active duty or retired).[3] Public spending data are measured at the ministry-year level and drawn, for 1946–2000, from the historical series of federal expenditure by ministry of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2007) and, for 2001–2024, from the federal budget system (Secretaria de Orçamento Federal, n.d.), using paid expenditure by budget body. Data on presidents' coalitional necessities are sourced from Nicolau (2004, 2022), Fleischer (2007), Hippolito (1985), the Superior Electoral Court (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, n.d.), Messenberg (2007), the Chamber of Deputies' open data (Câmara dos Deputados, n.d.), and Amorim Neto (2011); GDP *per capita* and GDP growth are sourced from IBGE's national accounts as published by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, n.d.); public debt from the International Monetary Fund's Public

[3] We do not, however, distinguish between officers who were on active duty at the time of appointment and those who had already been transferred to the reserve. This distinction matters for causal interpretation: active-duty officers remain formally subordinate to the military chain of command and may return to troop command after their ministerial term, whereas retired officers are less institutionally constrained, while still remaining emotionally attached to the troops and loyal to their corporate interests. Distinguishing between these two groups would allow for sharper tests of whether appointments reflect strategic coalition management, institutional tutelage, or individual careerism, and we flag this as a priority for future research.

Finances in Modern History database (Mauro et al., 2015); and democracy levels are sourced from V-Dem (Coppedge et al., 2026).

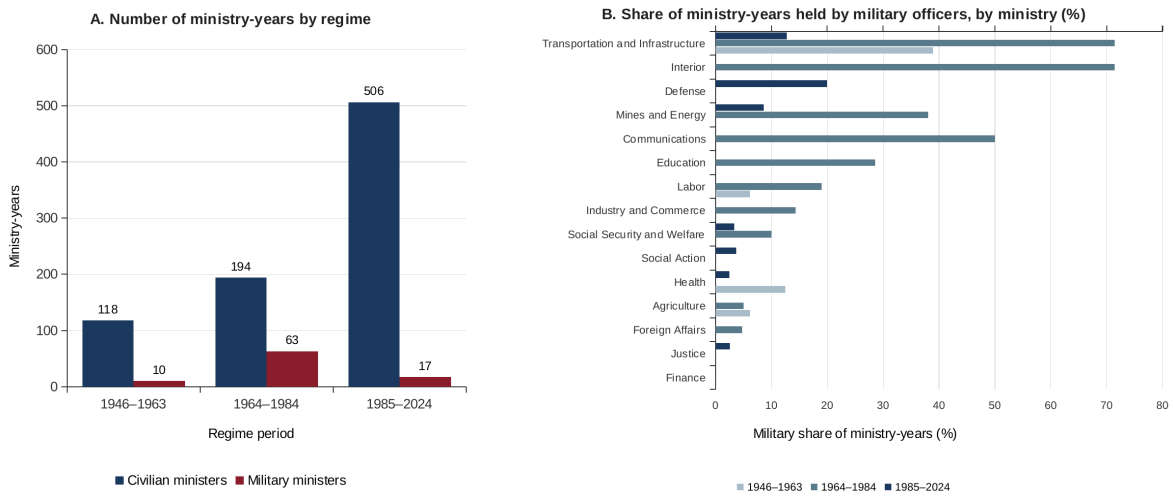
As many ministries were created, terminated, or merged, we had to harmonize presidential cabinets across administrations. For the spending analysis, ministries were therefore grouped into categories with continuous expenditure data. To enable consistent panel analysis, we harmonized ministry names and functions over time, following the logic used in IBGE's historical data. Because ministerial structures in Brazil have undergone frequent reforms, we avoided introducing new categories that would hinder comparability. Instead, we tracked the institutional origins and functions of ministries across decades. For example, the Ministry of Tourism, created in 2003, was aggregated into the existing category of "Industry and Commerce" because its previous iterations had operated as secretariats within that broader portfolio. Similarly, we unified the rubrics for Social Security and the National Social Security Institute (INSS) into a single category beginning in 1993, when the INSS budget was first disaggregated. The three branches of the armed forces that previously had their own ministries are excluded from our models. After 1999, these became the Ministry of Defense, which is included in our analyses because it is not a portfolio legally assigned to the military. Additionally, newly created ministries were merged into existing IBGE-compatible categories based on their administrative lineage and policy domain. This harmonization resulted in 15 consistent ministry categories for the entire 1946–2024 period, enabling accurate historical comparisons. Ministries without clear predecessors or minimal fiscal weight were excluded from the dataset.

We excluded from our dataset ministries explicitly reserved for military officers, which were a feature of Brazil's republican history, such as the Army, Navy, and Air Force Ministries prior to 1999, as well as the Institutional Security Office. The Ministry of Defense, established in 1999, is included in our dataset from 2000 because its leadership is not statutorily reserved for members or former members of the armed forces, despite the best efforts of former president Bolsonaro. Acting (interim) ministers are excluded throughout. For the analysis of appointments and spending, each ministry-year is assigned to the minister who held the post for more than half of the year (six months and one day); ministry-years in which no minister did so are excluded. The tenure analysis uses every stay in office in full, since its length is what the models explain. Stays that began in 1946 are excluded, since their lagged covariates would refer to 1945, under the Estado Novo and the caretaker government; keeping them does not change the results. The 15 harmonized categories are used where spending is the dependent variable: 908 ministry-area-years from 1946 to 2024. The analyses of appointments and tenure treat every ministry as its own unit — the 15 main ministries, the secondary ministries that the harmonization groups into them (e.g., Culture, Science and Technology, Planning, Cities), and the Casa Civil — for a total of 1,323 ministry-years.

Figure 1 below presents a comparative overview of the number of military and civilian ministers appointed across the three regimes, broken down by ministry. The data reveal clear shifts in cabinet recruitment over time. Always in minister-years, our unit of analysis, during the 1946–1964 democratic regime, military officers were a rarity in non-military portfolios, with only 10 appointments compared to 118 civilian appointments. This changed under authoritarian rule, when the number of military ministers rose to 63 — roughly a quarter of all appointments. Interestingly, while the number of civilian ministers surged in the current democratic regime, totaling over 500 appointments, military

appointments to the cabinet did not vanish. Seventeen military officers were still appointed to civilian ministries between 1985 and 2024, demonstrating that even in a democratic context, presidents have continued to rely on uniformed personnel for executive tasks.

FIGURE 1 MILITARY AND CIVILIAN MINISTERS PER REGIME AND MINISTRY, 1946–2024



Note: Unit of analysis: ministry-area-years (the minister who held the post for more than half of the year), 15 harmonized IBGE ministries. Panel B shows the share of these years held by military officers; ministries are ordered from most to least militarized over 1946–2024.

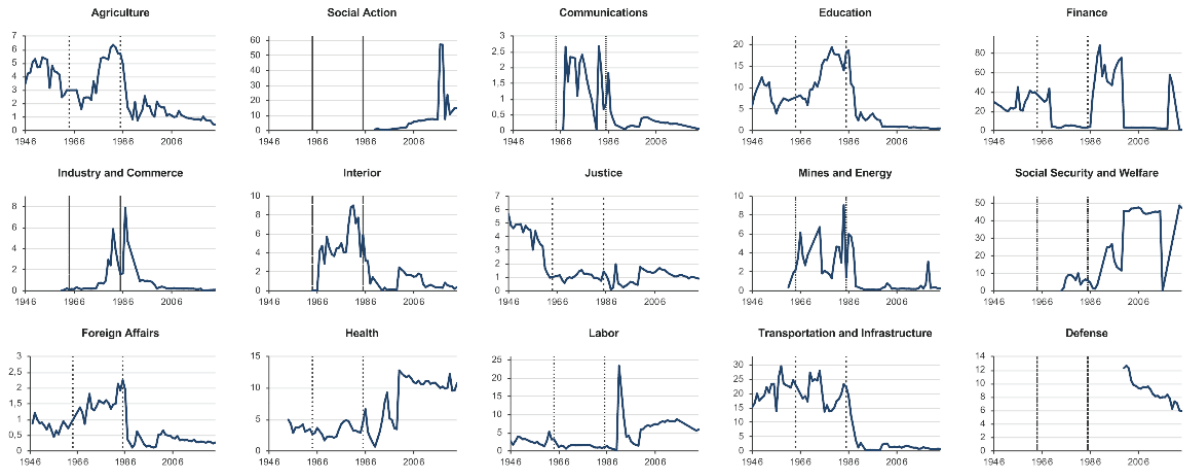
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 1 also displays the share of military ministers across our 15 harmonized ministries and by regime for 1946–2024. Interestingly, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is the only one to have been militarized across the three regimes, particularly under authoritarian rule. However, almost 40% of the ministry-years in this portfolio were held by a military head in the first democratic regime.

The Labor, Health, and Agriculture portfolios were somewhat militarized under the first democratic regime. Under the current democratic regime, in addition to Transportation and Infrastructure, six civilian cabinet positions have had military ministers: Defense, Justice, Social Security and Welfare, Mines and Energy, Social Action, and Health. Defense is the civilian portfolio that has had the largest share of military ministers in 1985–2024, a legacy of the Temer and Bolsonaro presidencies. Under the military regime, ten civilian ministries had military heads: Transportation and Infrastructure, Interior, Communications, Education, Social Security and Welfare, Mines and Energy, Labor, Industry and Commerce, Agriculture, and Foreign Affairs. This is an impressive, albeit unsurprising, record of the militarization of non-military-related portfolios. The military regime was particularly keen on militarizing the Transportation and Infrastructure, Interior, Communications, and Mines and Energy ministries. This is eloquent evidence of the Brazilian military's role in policy areas related to economic development, a role that was partly continued under the current democratic regime. These ministry-level patterns are theoretically significant: they suggest that cabinet militarization is

not evenly distributed across the executive branch but tends to concentrate in portfolios historically linked to infrastructure, strategic resources, and internal security — areas in which Brazil's military doctrine has traditionally — and presently — claimed institutional competence (Lentz, 2022).

FIGURE 2 SPENDING ACROSS MINISTRIES, 1946–2024



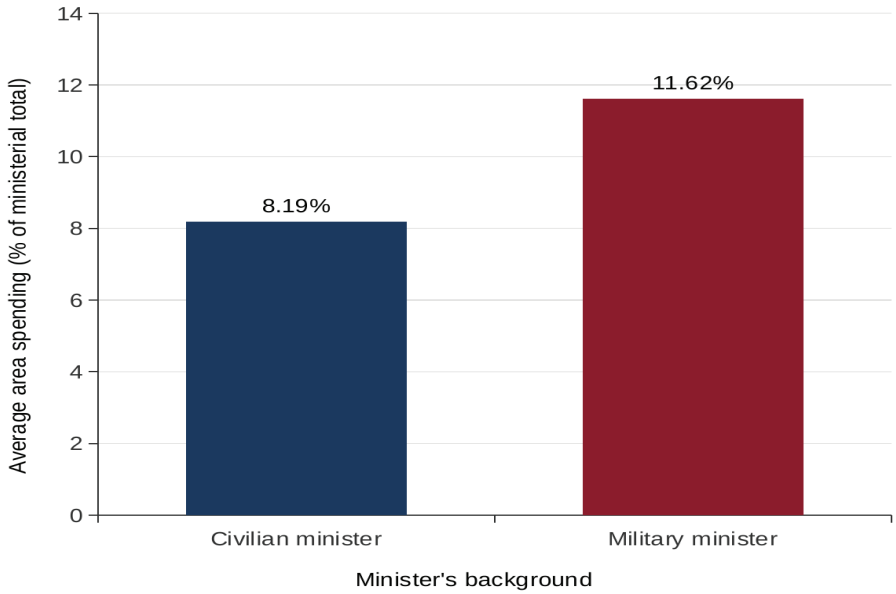
Note: Area spending as a percentage of total ministerial spending (IBGE, 1946–2000; SIOP paid expenditure, 2001–2024). Dashed vertical lines mark the regime transitions of 1964 and 1985. Horizontal axis: year (1946–2024). Vertical axis: area spending as % of total ministerial spending (scale varies by panel).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 2 above displays the evolution of expenditures across our 15 Brazilian ministries from 1946 to 2024. The panels reveal substantial heterogeneity in spending levels, trajectories, and volatility across portfolios. For instance, the Ministry of Finance exhibits consistently high and fluctuating expenditure patterns throughout the second half of the 20th century, reflecting its central role in macroeconomic management (Pinho, 2023). In contrast, ministries like Foreign Affairs and Justice display relatively flat, low spending across the entire period. Some ministries — such as Social Action, Social Security and Welfare, and Health — exhibit sharp increases in spending beginning in the 1990s or 2000s, possibly reflecting expanded social policy mandates and administrative reforms (Sátyro, 2025). The vertical dashed lines mark the regime transitions of 1964 and 1985, helping contextualize shifts in spending behavior relative to regime change. This figure shows wide variation within and across ministries, highlighting the importance of modeling ministry fixed effects and time dynamics to accurately assess the impact of minister characteristics — such as military background — on fiscal outcomes.

Figure 3 below presents a comparison of average ministry expenditures across the full 1946–2024 period, disaggregated by ministers' background (civilian vs. military). The visual evidence supports the notion that, on average, ministries led by military officers spend more than those led by civilians. Specifically, the average expenditure under military leadership is 11.6%, compared with 8.2% for civilian-led ministries.

FIGURE 3 AVERAGE MINISTRY SPENDING BY MINISTER TYPE, 1946–2024



Note: Mean ministry expenditure as a percentage of total cabinet expenditure across all harmonized ministry-years, by the minister's background.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

We now turn to the details of our multivariate statistical analysis.

1. For the analysis of appointments (RQ_1), the dependent variable is a binary indicator coded 1 if a military officer was appointed to lead a given ministry each year, and 0 otherwise.
2. For the analysis of tenure (RQ_2), the dependent variable is the duration (in days) of each ministerial term. Acting ministers were excluded to avoid conflating short-term interim appointments with regular terms.
3. For the analysis of spending (RQ_3), the dependent variable is each ministry's annual expenditure as a percentage of total cabinet expenditure in the areas not reserved for the military, which normalizes spending across ministries and over time.

Key independent variables vary by model but include:[4]

[4] The models do not include a control for whether the president holding office is a military officer or former military officer. This omission is less consequential than it may appear: under Brazilian law (*Estatuto dos Militares*), active-duty officers are prohibited from simultaneously holding civilian political office, meaning that all five military presidents of the 1964–1985 period were formally transferred to the reserve (*reserva remunerada*) before or upon assuming the presidency. Bolsonaro, who served as an Army captain before entering electoral politics in 1988, follows the same formal pattern.

- **Coalitional necessity:** Measured using the Index of Coalitional Necessity (ICN) developed by Power (Chaisty et al., 2018; Power, 2010), which estimates the extent to which a president needs to form cross-party alliances to secure legislative support. ICN incorporates "[…] two of the biggest structural constraints on presidents within legislatures: (1) the effective number of parties, and the share of lower house seats not held by the nominal party of the president" (Chaisty et al., 2018, pp. 27-28). The formula for calculating the ICN involves multiplying the Laakso-Taagepera effective number of parties by the complement of the president's party's seat share (divided by 10). We measure the ICN for the Chamber of Deputies the president faces when each decision is taken: the Chamber as elected in the first year of each legislature and, in other years, its composition in the previous year, combined with the party of the president in office on the date of the appointment.
- **Institutional constraints:** proxied by the V-Dem electoral democracy index.
- **Economic indicators:** GDP *per capita*, GDP growth, and debt as a percentage of GDP.
- **Lagged dependent variables:** especially for expenditure models, to capture the impact of prior budget levels and smooth volatility.

To evaluate our three hypotheses, we employ distinct but complementary modeling strategies tailored to each research question. For the analysis of military appointments (RQ_1), we estimate pooled logit and fixed effects logit models with ministry dummies to account for both observed and unobserved ministry-level heterogeneity. To assess differences in ministerial tenure (RQ_2), we use OLS regressions and Cox proportional hazards models.

For the analysis of spending outcomes (RQ_3), we estimate fixed effects panel models using Prais-Winsten regression with panel-corrected standard errors (PCSE) and AR(1) correction, in light of diagnostics indicating both heteroskedasticity and serial correlation.[5] All other time-varying covariates are lagged by one year to mitigate simultaneity bias. Subsample analysis for the current democratic regime (1985–2024) and interaction terms help capture changes across regime types.

4. MILITARY APPOINTMENTS

This section evaluates the political and institutional conditions under which military officers are appointed to cabinet positions. We estimate logit models with a binary dependent variable indicating whether a military officer was appointed to a given ministry in a given year. The main explanatory variable is the Index of Coalitional Necessity (ICN). Control variables include lagged economic performance, democracy scores, and a lagged dependent variable. Ministry fixed effects are included in one of the models to address unobserved heterogeneity.

[5] Model specification choice was guided by a battery of diagnostic tests. The Breusch-Pagan Lagrangian Multiplier (LM) test suggested no gain from estimating random-effects models. A Hausman test rejected random-effects estimators ($\chi^2 = 30.08$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that unobserved heterogeneity is correlated with the regressors. The Modified Wald test confirmed panel-specific heteroskedasticity ($p < 0.001$), while the Wooldridge test indicated first-order autocorrelation ($F(1, 14) = 77.214$, $p < 0.001$). Taken together, these results motivate the use of fixed effects estimation combined with fixed effects Prais-Winsten regression and AR(1) correction to address both heteroskedasticity and serial correlation.

Table 1 presents two logistic regression models of military appointments to the cabinet, with the Index of Coalitional Necessity (ICN) as the key independent variable. Both cover the full sample of cabinet appointments between 1946 and 2024, with every ministry as its own unit (1,224 ministry-years in Model 1).

Model 1 estimates a pooled logistic regression. The ICN coefficient is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and large: a one-standard-deviation increase in ICN (0.42 points) roughly quintuples the odds of appointing a military officer to the cabinet. This suggests that presidents with a greater need to muster fragmented cross-party coalitions are more likely to rely on military personnel. Model 2 adds ministry fixed effects, necessarily dropping ministries that never had a military head. The effect of ICN becomes even more pronounced: a one-standard-deviation increase now multiplies the odds by roughly six – and remains statistically significant at the 1% level. This provides strong evidence that the association between coalitional necessities and military appointments is not driven solely by differences across ministries.

Across the two models, democracy is strongly and consistently associated with a lower likelihood of military appointments, while public debt is associated with fewer military appointments and the other variables are not robust predictors. Taken together, these results offer strong support for the coalitional necessity hypothesis: military appointments to civilian ministries increase when presidents are politically vulnerable, especially when their party is relatively small.

TABLE 1 CORRELATES OF THE APPOINTMENT OF MILITARY OFFICERS TO THE CABINET IN 1946–2024

	Model 1	Model 2
	Pooled	Ministry FE
Index of Coalitional Necessity	3.720***	4.251***
	(0.714)	(0.927)
Electoral Democracy Index (*t*–1)	–8.186***	–9.941***
	(1.592)	(1.947)
GDP *Per Capita* Growth (*t*–1)	–0.038	–0.048
	(0.041)	(0.047)
Public Debt as % of GDP (*t*–1)	–0.025*	–0.029*
	(0.013)	(0.015)
GDP *Per Capita* (*t*–1)	0.112	0.098
	(0.120)	(0.148)
Lagged Dependent Variable	3.594***	2.641***
	(0.248)	(0.322)

(Continue)

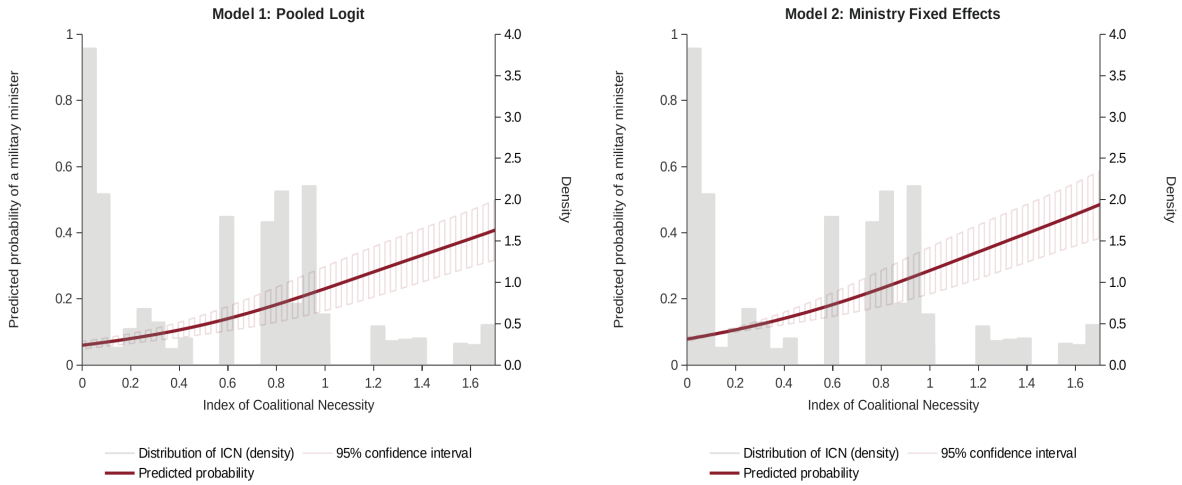
	Model 1	Model 2
	Pooled	Ministry FE
Constant	–0.929*	–0.908*
	(0.484)	(0.520)
Pseudo R^2	0.494	0.525
Observations	1,224	929

Note: Logistic regression models. Coefficients are log-odds: a positive value indicates a higher probability that a military officer will be appointed to the cabinet, and a negative value indicates a lower probability. Model 2 includes ministry fixed effects to account for time-invariant heterogeneity across ministries; robust standard errors clustered by ministry in parentheses. Wald χ^2 not reported for Model 2 due to omitted clusters. Statistical Significance: * $p<0,1$, ** $p<0,05$, *** $p<0,01$.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Substantive interpretation of the effects is warranted to further reinforce these findings. As Figure 4 illustrates, increases in the Index of Coalitional Necessity from 0 to 1.6 substantially elevate the predicted probability of military appointments, from about 6% to 42% in the pooled model and from about 7% to 50% in the fixed effects specification.

FIGURE 4 PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF A MILITARY APPOINTMENT BY INDEX OF COALITIONAL NECESSITY (MODELS 1 AND 2, TABLE 1)



Note: Average predicted probabilities from the logit models in Table 1, with other covariates at their observed values; shaded areas are 95% confidence intervals. Bars show the density of the Index of Coalitional Necessity across the ministry-years of Model 1 (right axis; $N = 1,224$).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

5. TENURE IN OFFICE

To evaluate whether military ministers enjoy greater tenure stability, we employ two complementary strategies. First, we estimate OLS regressions where the dependent variable is the number of days a minister remains in office. These models offer an intuitive and direct comparison of durability between military and civilian ministers, while controlling for ministry fixed effects and macroeconomic variables. Second, we use Cox proportional hazards models to more rigorously estimate differences in the risk of exit from office over time. The Cox models allow for right-censoring of ministers who remain in office at the time of data closure and provide hazard ratios for the military variable, capturing its influence on tenure stability.

To evaluate whether military ministers tend to remain in office longer than their civilian counterparts, Table 2 reports two OLS regressions with ministry fixed effects, estimated on 802 stays in office across all ministries between 1946 and 2024. Models 3 and 4 use the Index of Coalitional Necessity (ICN) as the key political covariate. Model 4 includes an interaction term between military status and a dummy for the 1985–2024 democratic regime (the so-called New Republic) to capture potential changes in tenure dynamics across regimes.

TABLE 2 OLS REGRESSIONS: MILITARY STATUS AND MINISTERIAL TENURE

	Model 3	Model 4
	Baseline OLS	Interaction: Military × post-1984
Military Officer as a Minister	221.064**	358.334***
	(95.819)	(113.215)
Post-1984		–363.887***
		(86.462)
Military × post-1984		–337.716**
		(128.875)
Index of Coalitional Necessity	–360.378***	–453.138***
	(75.801)	(69.528)
Electoral Democracy Index (*t*–1)	–97.833	301.902
	(184.903)	(216.465)
GDP *Per Capita* Growth (*t*–1)	39.335***	39.226***
	(5.891)	(5.928)
Public Debt as % of GDP (*t*–1)	–1.695	0.212
	(1.791)	(1.731)
GDP *Per Capita* (*t*–1)	89.222***	116.714***

(Continue)

	Model 3	Model 4
	Baseline OLS	Interaction: Military × post-1984
	(22.435)	(23.762)
Ministry Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.153	0.172
Observations	802	802

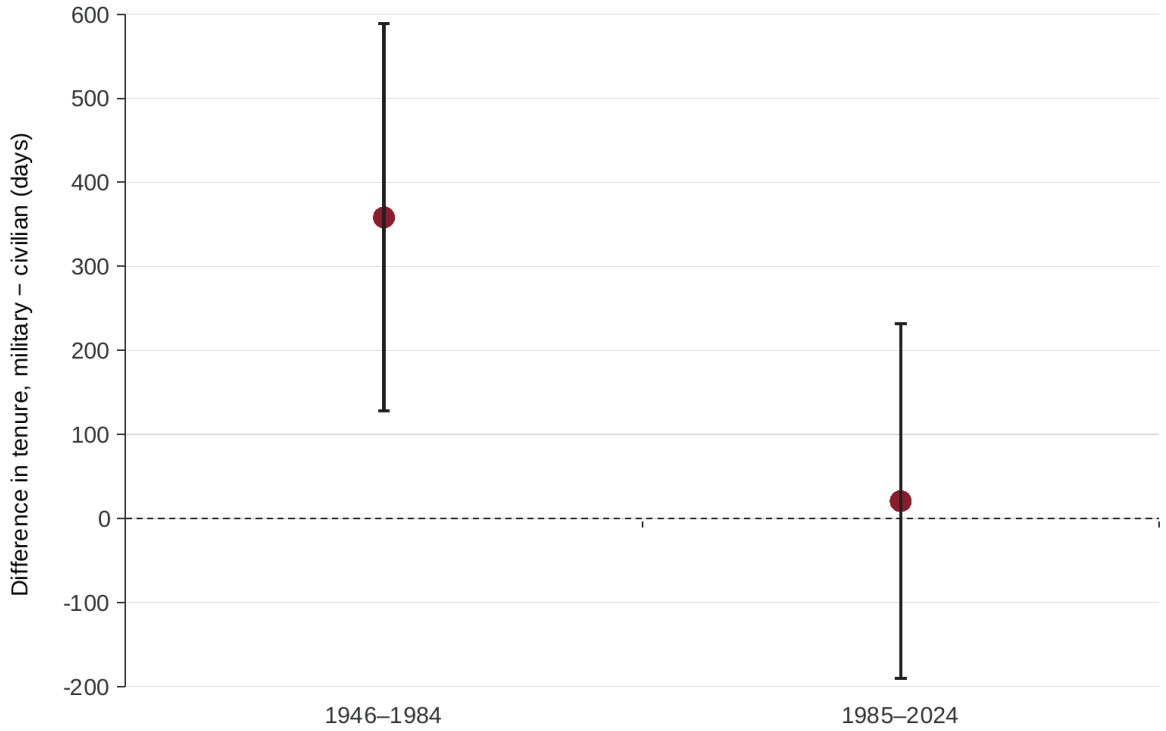
Note: OLS regression models. The dependent variable is ministerial tenure in days. Coefficients represent the estimated change in tenure (in days) associated with a one-unit increase in each predictor. Standard errors clustered by ministry in parentheses. Statistical Significance: * p<0,1, ** p<0,05, *** p<0,01.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In Model 3, which is our baseline specification, military ministers have longer average tenures than their civilian counterparts. The coefficient on the military officer variable is positive and statistically significant at the 5% level (221.1 days), suggesting that over the whole 1946–2024 period, officers held cabinet posts roughly seven months longer than civilians, on average. Model 4 shows that this advantage is confined to years before 1985. Once the current democratic regime interaction is included, the results show that the longer tenures associated with military ministers are confined to the authoritarian period. The military officer coefficient now captures the military-civilian gap in tenure prior to the New Republic, and it is large and precisely estimated (358.3 days, $p < 0.01$). The interaction term (−337.7 days, $p < 0.05$) indicates that this gap shrank sharply after 1985. Combining the two coefficients, the military-civilian difference under the current democratic regime is about 21 days and statistically indistinguishable from zero. The negative coefficient on the post-1984 dummy (−363.9 days) also shows that ministerial terms became substantially shorter for all ministers under the New Republic, civilian and military alike.

Figure 5 plots the two marginal effects from Model 4. Before 1985 — a period that marked Brazil's first democratic experience and the military regime — military officers enjoyed significantly longer tenures than civilians; after 1985, the difference disappears. This interaction term seems to capture a structural shift in how military officers are used within the cabinet. Before 1985, they may have enjoyed institutional insulation, loyalty-based trust from presidents under whom they served, or fewer replacement pressures because Congress was not important for the day-to-day running of the government after 1964 (Santos, 1987, pp. 70-75). In contrast, under the 1985–2024 democracy, military appointments appear to be more precarious, likely reflecting weaker political capital or instrumental use during temporary crises. This is consistent with the story of progress in establishing civilian control over the military from the first civilian presidency to the Michel Temer administration.

FIGURE 5 MARGINAL EFFECT OF MILITARY OFFICER ON MINISTERIAL TENURE BY REGIME PERIOD (MODEL 4, TABLE 2)



Note: Points are the estimated difference in tenure (days) between military and civilian ministers; bars are 95% confidence intervals from standard errors clustered by ministry. From Model 4, which interacts military status with the 1985–2024 democratic-regime dummy, ICN is the key political covariate.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

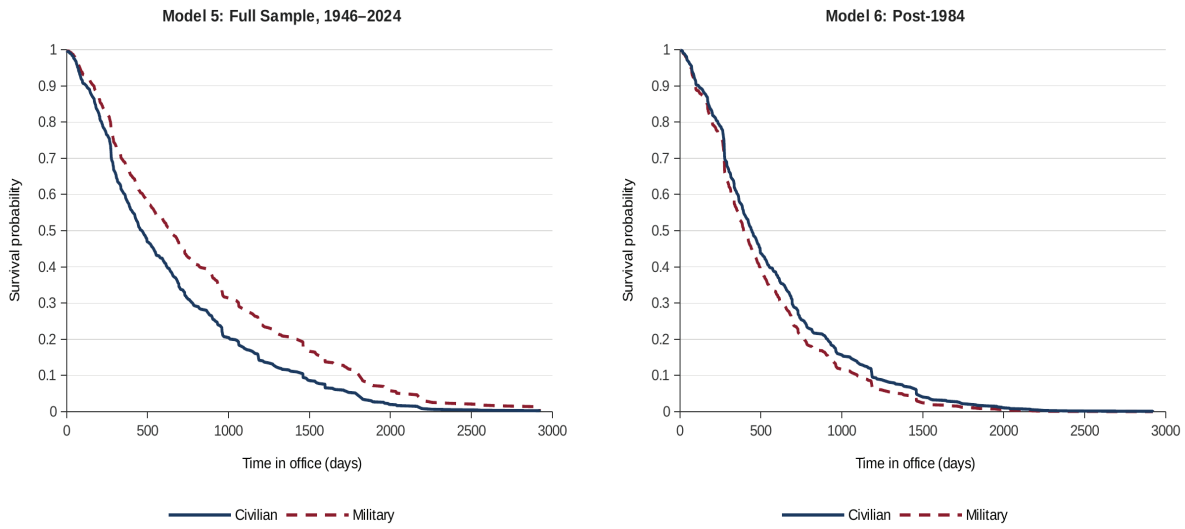
Control variables behave as expected. The greater the president's coalitional necessities, the shorter ministerial tenures are. Economic factors like GDP *per capita* growth and overall *per capita* income are positively and significantly associated with tenure, indicating that ministers' stability and economic performance are linked.

In sum, these results challenge the assumption that military ministers are inherently more stable or effective officeholders. Instead, their tenure is highly conditional on regime context. Under authoritarianism, they stayed longer; under democracy, before 1985, they stayed longer than civilians; under the New Republic, that advantage has dissipated. This underscores how government-military relations evolve under democratic constraints and shows that military ministers — despite often being viewed as disciplined or non-partisan, and maybe because of it — enjoy no durability premium in politically competitive, pluralistic environments.

We also produced survival models, displayed in Figure 6 below and in Table 4 in the appendix. To complement these duration estimates, the appendix also reports two Cox proportional hazards models analyzing ministerial survival as a continuous-time event (Models 5 and 6). These models allow us to examine the hazard of exiting the cabinet (i.e., being dismissed or resigning) over time, accounting

for right-censoring (ministers still in office at the end of 2024) and using the same covariates and regime breakdowns as before.[6]

FIGURE 6 ADJUSTED SURVIVAL BY MILITARY STATUS (MODELS 5 AND 6, TABLE 4 IN THE APPENDIX)



Note: Cox proportional hazards models; survival curves evaluated at the sample means of the other covariates (ICN, democracy, growth, debt, GDP *per capita*, ministry fixed effects). Time is days in office within a continuous ministerial spell; all ministries; ministers still in office on 31 December 2024 are censored.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In the full-sample model (Model 5), military ministers exhibit a significantly lower hazard rate than civilian ministers ($p < 0.10$), indicating that they are less likely to be removed from office at any given time. This aligns with the positive tenure findings from Models 3 and 4 and confirms that over the entire 1946–2024 period, military ministers are more durable in office. Substantively, the hazard ratio indicates a roughly 27% decrease in the daily likelihood of exit for military ministers compared with civilian ministers.

However, in the post-1984 subsample (Model 6), the coefficient on the military minister variable becomes statistically indistinguishable from zero, suggesting that under democratic rule military ministers do not enjoy longer survival rates than civilian ministers. This is consistent with the interaction results in the OLS models and reinforces the idea that democratic politics has equalized the tenure advantages once enjoyed by military officers.

[6] The replication files report the following robustness checks, none of which alters our conclusions: assigning each ministry-year to its longest-serving minister, with no minimum time in office; adding year fixed effects to the spending models; censoring, in the Cox models, exits caused by the abolition or merger of a ministry; estimating Models 3 and 4 on completed stays only; keeping the stays that began in 1946; and computing the Index of Coalitional Necessity from election results alone.

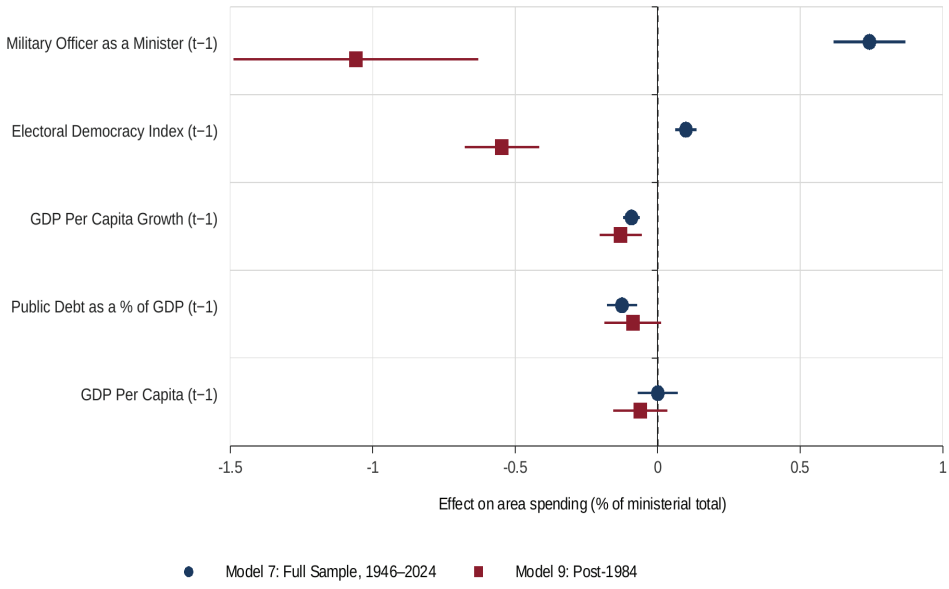
Figure 6 above helps us to visualize these dynamics. In the full-sample model, the survival curve for military ministers lies above that of civilian ministers, reflecting a higher probability of remaining in office over time. However, in the post-1984 panel, these differences largely disappear, with civilian and military curves overlapping. This convergence indicates that the tenure differential between military and civilian ministers has flattened under the current democratic regime, consistent with the OLS interaction findings.

Overall, these survival models corroborate the tenure results. Military officers were more durable ministers before 1985, but that advantage has dissipated since re-democratization. These findings challenge the notion that military ministers are protected by presidents or inherently untouchable because they wear or wore the uniform. Instead, their durability appears contingent on the political context, particularly the rules and expectations of democratic politics typical of Brazil's coalitional presidentialism.

6. FISCAL IMPACT

To evaluate the budgetary consequences of military appointments, we estimate Prais-Winsten panel regressions with AR(1) correction and ministry fixed effects, using annual ministry-level public expenditure as the dependent variable. Table 5 in the appendix (Models 7-9) summarizes the results, and Figures 7 and 8 below present the effects via standardized coefficient plots and marginal effect estimates.

FIGURE 7 STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS, MINISTRY SPENDING (MODELS 7 AND 9, TABLE 5 IN THE APPENDIX)



Note: Prais-Winsten regressions with AR(1) correction, ministry fixed effects, and panel-corrected standard errors; continuous predictors standardized (*z*-scores). Constant and lagged dependent variable omitted for brevity; 95% CIs.

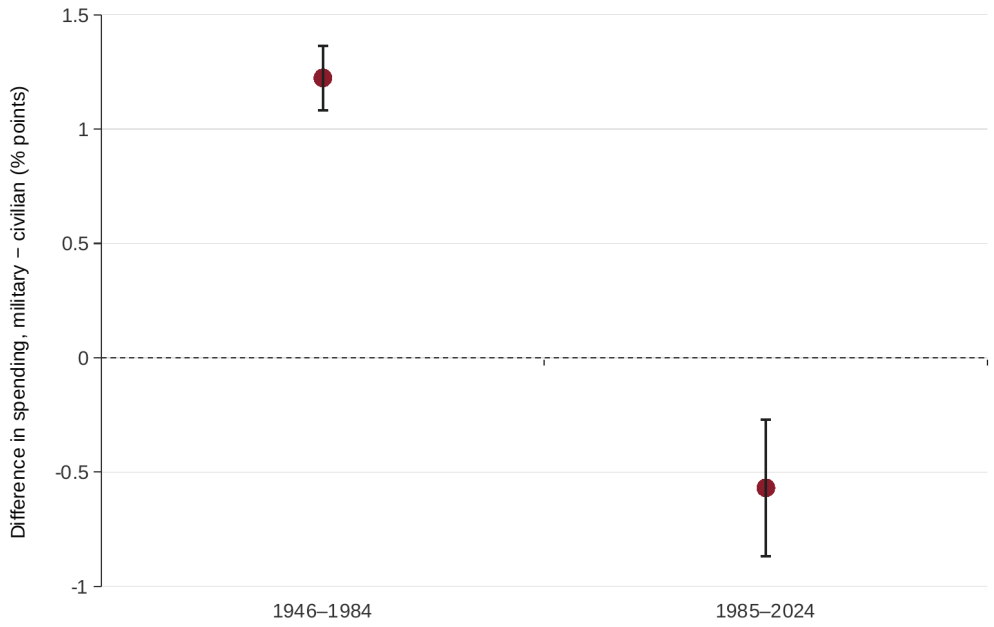
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In the full sample from 1946 to 2024 (Model 7), the coefficient on military ministers is positive (0.743) and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that ministries led by military officers spent more than those led by civilians, even when controlling for GDP growth, public debt, and GDP *per capita*. The effect is statistically significant and substantively meaningful, suggesting that military officers are associated with a more expansive fiscal behavior. The finding supports the Effective Lobbying Hypothesis (H_3). It is consistent with a role in which military ministers leverage their status as guardians of the nation to access public resources for their organizations or political ends.

However, this pattern shifts dramatically in the current democratic period. In the post-1984 model (Model 9), the coefficient on military ministers becomes negative (−1.059) and remains statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). This implies a marked reduction in expenditures when military officers head ministries, consistent with the Austerity Hypothesis (H_{3b}) during 1985–2024. The effect size is large, suggesting a sharp contrast in the spending behavior of military ministers under democratic versus non-democratic rule.

Model 8 confirms the robustness of this interpretation. By interacting the military officer variable with a dummy for the New Republic period, we find that the effect of military ministers is strongly conditional on regime context. The interaction term is negative (−1.793) and highly significant. This specification allows us to statistically test and visualize the shift, as plotted in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8 MARGINAL EFFECT OF A MILITARY MINISTER (*T*–1) ON SPENDING BY REGIME PERIOD (MODEL 8, TABLE 5 IN THE APPENDIX)



Note: Effect of a military officer heading the ministry in the previous year on area spending (% of total cabinet spending), from the interaction model; 95% confidence intervals from panel-corrected standard errors.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Taken together, these models demonstrate that the fiscal impact of military appointments is neither uniform nor time-invariant, and so is the role of the armed forces in Brazilian history. Military officers in the cabinet behaved as spenders under democratic (1946–1964) and authoritarian (1964–1985) conditions. However, military ministers seem to have become budgetary disciplinarians in the democratic context of the 1985–2024 period. These results highlight how regimes shape the behavioral incentives and political roles of the armed forces, revealing the contingent nature of their influence on public resource allocation. This finding may also signal a shift in the military's spending preferences: whereas before 1985 they tended to favor higher expenditures tied to economic modernization, over time they embraced fiscal austerity — reflecting their managerial training, especially after the Cardoso administration's reforms to government procurement (Amorim Neto & Acácio, 2020, 2025, p. 122). Recent oral history compendia with high-ranking military officers performing peacekeeping, humanitarian, and public safety operations provide ample evidence on the self-perceived administrative competence that officers develop, given the wide array of missions they perform and the training they receive both within military institutions and in specialized civilian institutions (Castro & Marques, 2019; Castro et al., 2022; Castro et al., 2023).

Finally, it is important to note that all of those findings pertain specifically to civilian ministries — that is, portfolios not statutorily reserved for military officers. Whether analogous or contrasting patterns hold for defense-related portfolios or for the budgets of the armed forces themselves is a question our data cannot address, and one that deserves separate empirical attention, about which a few studies exist (Amorim Neto & Acácio, 2025, 2026).

7. CONCLUSION

The military's presence in Brazil's executive branch is rooted in deep historical legacies, yet it has been neither static nor uniform. Over eight decades and across three regimes, officers have been appointed to presidential cabinets under varying political configurations. Bridging insights from the literatures on civil-military relations and coalitional presidentialism, this paper has shown that these appointments are more likely when presidents face great coalitional necessities and need non-partisan allies to staff key ministries. While military ministers often remain in office longer than civilians, this pattern does not hold consistently after 1985. Additionally, our analysis of fiscal outcomes reveals a dual character: while military ministers are generally associated with higher spending over the entire period, they are associated with lower spending during the current democratic regime.

Our data show that these appointments cluster around moments of great coalitional necessities on the presidential side of the equation: they are not the product of a stable division of labor between civilian and military personnel, but rather responses to political pressure. This finding connects the literature on coalitional presidentialism to the broader scholarship on military political involvement. When presidents face a fragmented Congress and their party is relatively small, they may turn to uniformed personnel as a substitute — but, as our tenure results show, this substitution is inherently brittle under democratic conditions. Thus, students of coalitional presidentialism are well advised to add cabinet militarization to the president's toolbox (Raile et al., 2011).

In the Brazilian case, the appointment of soldiers to non-military-related portfolios tells us as much about presidential weakness as it does about the political ambitions of military officers. The Brazilian armed forces rarely deploy abroad for warfighting — the last major combat experience

being in the hills of Italy during World War II — but they are routinely involved in a wide array of less advisable domestic missions, such as occupying favelas in Rio de Janeiro and elsewhere. The one consistent defining element of military professionalism in Brazil has become the cultivation of managerial expertise, a skill set that officers both acquire in their careers and actively showcase as a source of legitimacy.

Nevertheless, this dynamic creates a paradox: if military officers see their ambitions fulfilled not in the barracks but in government positions that are unrelated to national defense, then their careers will blend professional military training with generic public-sector managerial roles. When officers with such heterogeneous career ambitions and pathways perceive civilian elites as engaged in waste, fraud, and abuse, the temptation to support military interventions or the premature termination of governments grows stronger. As the preferences of military officers are often opaque — because military institutions are inherently not transparent — it is always difficult to anticipate when the call to their managerial "duty" will translate into dangerous political action.

Therefore, when officers are appointed to civilian ministries under thorny conditions – as our data suggests is often the case — they enter civilian governance as agents of a president already in a weak position. Their presence signals not institutional competence but political vulnerability. Over time, and across administrations, repeated resort to military appointments normalizes the armed forces as a legitimate instrument for civilian governance — eroding the conceptual and institutional boundary between military and civilian roles. This is the dynamic we call mission creep: not a single dramatic incursion, but an incremental erosion of civilian control through the accumulation of appointments, networks, and administrative precedents. Events in Brazil between 2018 and 2023 — in which officers appointed during earlier administrations remained embedded in state institutions as Bolsonaro weaponized the military against democratic norms — illustrate how this dynamic can unfold across presidencies and reach crisis proportions.

In other words, given Brazil's long-standing history of praetorianism,[7] appointing military officers to cabinet positions risks jeopardizing the stability of democracy and its *sine qua non*: civilian control over the armed forces.

In sum, the implications of our findings are threefold. First, they underscore that military involvement in democratic politics emerges not only from authoritarian legacies or the ideological preferences of chief executives or officers, but also from the contextual vulnerabilities of coalitional presidentialism: presidents challenged by great coalitional necessities may turn to military personnel as a substitute for party politicians, with consequences that extend beyond any single administration. Second, our findings suggest that military ministers are neither stable nor institutionally benign: under democratic conditions, military ministers no longer serve longer tenures, are associated with lower spending when they are in charge of ministries not statutorily reserved for them, and respond to crisis management on the part of the president, instead of durable governance partnerships. Third, ministerial

[7] In the words of Perlmutter (1977, p. 93), "Modern praetorianism is the praetorianism of the professional soldier. A modern praetorian state is one in which the military tends to intervene in the government and has the potential to dominate the executive. Among its characteristics are an ineffective executive and political decay." This definition fits Brazil's republican history impressively well. The literature applying the concept to Brazil – spanning history, political science, and sociology – is too extensive to review in a paper whose key contribution is empirical, such as this one. For comprehensive bibliographic surveys of the Brazilian military studies field, see Coelho (1985) and Penido et al. (2021). For the most authoritative historical account of civil-military relations in Brazil across the full republican period, see Carvalho (2005). For the most recent analytical review of competing models of civil-military relations in Brazil, see Lemos de Souza and Leirner (2025).

appointment patterns reveal that cabinet militarization is not distributed randomly across portfolios but tends to concentrate in specific policy domains — particularly infrastructure, communications, and energy — in which the armed forces have developed doctrines and consider themselves experts.

These structured patterns of penetration in the executive branch, even when the appointing presidents are long gone, constitute the lasting institutional legacy of what we call mission creep. This is consistent with the qualitatively oriented literature on military doctrine in Brazil, which has long noted that the National Security Doctrine, formulated at the Escola Superior de Guerra and consolidated during the military regime, explicitly assigned the armed forces a leading role in national development, industrialization, and the protection of strategic sectors (Lentz, 2022; Stepan, 1971; Zaverucha, 2000).

Two limitations of the present study deserve mention as avenues for future research. First, our military officer variable does not distinguish between active-duty officers and those already transferred to the reserve at the time of appointment. This distinction carries causal implications: active-duty officers remain subject to the military chain of command, whereas retired officers may have more autonomy. Second, our models treat all civilian ministries as equivalent, even though our data reveal that militarization has historically been concentrated in portfolios linked to infrastructure, communications, and strategic resources. Whether the appointment logic and fiscal consequences we document operate differently across historically militarized and genuinely civilian portfolios is a question our article leaves unanswered.

All told, the causes and consequences of cabinet militarization are therefore a matter of executive-legislative relations and a central question for the study of civil-military relations and the consolidation of democratic civilian control in Brazil.

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Octavio Amorim Neto

Ph.D. in Political Science (University of California, San Diego); Full Professor at the Brazilian School of Public and Business Administration (EBAPE), Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV), Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil. E-mail: octavio.amorim.neto@fgv.br

Igor Acácio

Ph.D. in Political Science (University of California, Riverside); Assistant Professor in the Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice, Fullerton, United States. E-mail: igoracacio@fullerton.edu

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Octavio Amorim Neto: Conceptualization (Equal); Data curation (Equal); Formal analysis (Equal); Investigation (Equal); Methodology (Equal); Project administration (Equal); Software (Equal); Validation (Equal); Visualization (Equal); Writing – original draft (Equal); Writing – review & editing (Equal).

Igor Acácio: Conceptualization (Equal); Data curation (Equal); Formal analysis (Equal); Investigation (Equal); Methodology (Equal); Project administration (Equal); Software (Equal); Validation (Equal); Visualization (Equal); Writing – original draft (Equal); Writing – review & editing (Equal).

RESEARCH DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study is available upon request to the corresponding author Octavio Amorim Neto.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE

The ChatGPT tool was used to assist with the technical and grammatical review of the text and the standardization of references. The Claude tool was used to reproduce the figures in the editable format required by the journal and to compile and cross-check the reported estimates against the replication code.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Ministry Expenditures as a % of Cabinet Expenditures	901	8.523	15.341	0.012	91.55
Military Officer as a Minister	908	0.099	0.299	0	1
Military Officer as a Minister (*t*–1)	854	0.105	0.307	0	1
Index of Coalitional Necessity	908	0.522	0.424	0.047	1.564
Electoral Democracy Index (*t*–1)	908	0.563	0.285	0.11	0.875
GDP *Percapita* Growth (*t*–1)	908	2.415	3.580	–6.428	11.114
Public Debt as a % of GDP (*t*–1)	908	44.885	23.287	5.54	96.01
GDP *Percapita* (*t*–1)	908	6.271	2.460	1.441	9.875
Ministry Expenditures as a % of Cabinet Expenditures (*t*–1)	883	8.545	15.362	0.004	91.55

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

TABLE 4 CORRELATES OF MINISTERIAL SURVIVAL, COX PROPORTIONAL HAZARD MODELS

	Model 5	Model 6
	Full Sample	Post-1984
Military Officer as a Minister	–0.315*	0.146
	(0.166)	(0.204)
Index of Coalitional Necessity (at appointment)	0.939***	0.645***
	(0.175)	(0.226)
Electoral Democracy Index (*t*–1)	0.175	–1.709***
	(0.269)	(0.450)
GDP *Per Capita* Growth (*t*–1)	–0.070***	–0.115***
	(0.011)	(0.016)
Public Debt as % of GDP (*t*–1)	–0.004	–0.016***
	(0.003)	(0.004)
GDP *Per Capita* (*t*–1)	–0.171***	0.028
	(0.034)	(0.070)
Ministry Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R^2	0.017	0.020

Continue

	Model 5	Model 6
	Full Sample	Post-1984
χ^2	127,764.905	44,692.603
Prob > χ^2	0.000	0.000
AIC	8,696.995	5,516.352
BIC	8,837.608	5,645.813
Observations	802	553

Note: Cox proportional hazards models. Coefficients are log hazard ratios (LHR): a negative value indicates a lower risk of cabinet exit (longer survival), and a positive value indicates a higher risk of exit (shorter survival). Standard errors clustered by ministry in parentheses. Ministers still in office on 31 December 2024 are censored. Statistical Significance: * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

TABLE 5 CORRELATES OF CABINET EXPENDITURES

	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
	FE Full Sample	FE Full Sample w/ Interaction	FE Post-1984
Military Officer as a Minister (t–1)	0.743***	1.224***	–1.059***
	(0.065)	(0.072)	(0.219)
New Republic		0.369***	
		(0.087)	
Military Officer as a Minister (t–1) x New Republic		–1.793***	
		(0.165)	
Electoral Democracy Index (t–1)	0.347***	–0.023	–4.103***
	(0.068)	(0.143)	(0.502)
GDP *per capita* Growth (t–1)	–0.026***	–0.030***	–0.046***
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.014)
Public Debt as a % of GDP (t–1)	–0.005***	–0.003*	–0.005*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)
GDP *per capita* (t–1)	0.000	–0.035**	–0.053
	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.041)
Lagged Dependent Variable	0.916***	0.909***	0.460***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.030)

Continue

	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
	FE Full Sample	FE Full Sample w/ Interaction	FE Post-1984
Constant	0.288***	0.404***	4.557***
	(0.069)	(0.086)	(0.471)
Observations	847	847	493
R^2	0.943	0.942	0.957
Number of Ministries (IBGE)	15	15	15

Note: Prais-Winsten regressions, panel-corrected standard rrrors in parentheses, AR(1) Correction. Statistical Significance: * $p<0.10$, ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.