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**RESHAPING POWER: presidential interruptions and political realignment in Latin
America**

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**RESHAPING POWER: presidential interruptions and political
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To Audrey

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This preface has been 10 years in the making. So many things have happened since the first day I sat at a wobbly desk in one of the old classrooms of the Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences. All the growth, accomplishments, and losses make the last decade of my life impossible to grasp, like a fading dream that, the more I try to comprehend, the more it slips through the cracks of the present. The only thing I can truly extract from this journey is how thankful I am. Thankful for winning the existence lottery of infinite, random cosmic interactions and permutations that culminated in me typing this sappy acknowledgment at two o'clock in the morning. Thankful for having pushed through crippling mental barriers that always felt impossible to pierce. Thankful for finally understanding what makes me tick and for realizing that my shortcomings are less character flaws and more products of a quirky brain.

I'm also thankful for all the people who kept me company through this quest: my friend and advisor, Manoel Santos, for his patience, the liberty he granted and, more importantly, for believing in me; all the professors and staff of the Political Science Department of the Federal University of Minas Gerais for their continuous encouragement, intellectual generosity, and unwavering commitment to fostering academic growth; and all the colleagues and peers who — in one way or another — inspired me to do better.

I'm especially thankful for my wife, whom I met within the walls of this very institution and who has been a steady and constant influx of joy, companionship, and intellect in my life since then.

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“You got to know when to hold 'em,
Know when to fold 'em,
Know when to walk away,
And know when to run.
You never count your money
When you're sittin' at the table.
There'll be time enough for countin'
When the dealing's done”.

– Don Schlitz, *The Gambler*, 1978.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines presidential interruptions in Latin America, analyzing their impact on executive-legislative dynamics, coalition politics, and agenda-setting. Contrary to conventional narratives framing these events as indicators of instability, this study argues that they function as recalibration mechanisms, fostering government concentration and legislative cohesion while reshaping power relations. Drawing on a game-theoretic framework and empirical analysis of 792 administration-years across 18 countries, the research explores how interruptions emerge from strategic interactions among political elites and how they drive systemic realignments.

The findings reveal that interruptions are preceded by heightened legislative oversight, increased executive dependence on legislative confidence, and intensified polarization, highlighting the legislature's central role as an arbiter of power. Post-interruption, governments consolidate coalitions and align ideologically with the legislature, stabilizing governance and reducing polarization. Meanwhile, opposition cohesion declines, reflecting the disruption of former governing coalitions.

Keywords: presidentialism; presidential interruption; impeachment; executive-legislative relations; Latin America; comparative politics; game theory; Bayesian statistics

RESUMO

Esta dissertação examina as interrupções presidenciais na América Latina, analisando seu impacto nas dinâmicas executivo-legislativo, na política de coalizões e no estabelecimento de agendas. Contrariando narrativas convencionais que enquadram esses eventos como indicadores de instabilidade, este estudo argumenta que eles funcionam como mecanismos de recalibração, promovendo a concentração governamental e a coesão legislativa, ao mesmo tempo em que reconfiguram as relações de poder. Baseando-se em um modelo teórico de jogos e em uma análise empírica de 792 anos de governo em 18 países, a pesquisa explora como as interrupções surgem de interações estratégicas entre as elites políticas e como elas impulsionam realinhamentos sistêmicos.

Os resultados revelam que as interrupções são precedidas por um aumento na supervisão legislativa, maior dependência do executivo em relação à confiança legislativa e polarização intensificada, destacando o papel central do legislativo como árbitro de poder. Após as interrupções, os governos consolidam coalizões e se alinham ideologicamente com o legislativo, estabilizando a governança e reduzindo a polarização. Ao mesmo tempo, a coesão da oposição declina, refletindo a desestruturação das coalizões governistas anteriores.

Palavras-chave: presidencialismo; interrupções de mandatos presidenciais; impeachment; relações executivo-legislativo; América Latina; política comparada; teoria dos jogos; estatística Bayesiana

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMM	Bayesian Multivariate Multilevel Models
CEM	Coarsened Exact Matching
CI	Confidence Interval
GDPpc	Gross Domestic Product per capita
MMR	Multivariate Multiple Regression

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1 INTRODUCTION

In Latin America, the ousting of a president often evokes images of turmoil, institutional distress, and democratic fragility. Yet, beneath the surface of these dramatic political episodes, lies a paradox that challenges traditional assumptions about instability and governance.

Presidential interruptions, far from being mere crises or systematic failures, often function as pivotal moments of recalibration, reshaping the balance of power between the executive and legislature and fostering a new equilibrium. For every headline declaring political collapse, there are undercurrents of strategic maneuvering, coalition realignments, and shifts in legislative cohesion that reveal an enduring adaptability in the region's democratic institutions.

This dual nature of presidential interruptions — as moments of tension and opportunities for institutional adaptation — raises fundamental questions about their real impact. Are these removals simply symptoms of political dysfunction, or do they play a deeper role in maintaining equilibrium within presidential systems? In exploring this phenomenon, this study delves into the adaptive and often misunderstood dynamics of Latin America's executive-legislative relations, presenting a fresh lens through which to view democratic resilience in the region. It asks: How do presidential interruptions affect the political landscape in which the government and legislature operate?

As a possible answer to this question, it hypothesizes that presidential interruptions catalyze a reconfiguration of the political landscape, leading to increased government concentration and legislative cohesion.

Overall, this dissertation provides compelling evidence that presidential interruptions, far from being purely destabilizing events, act as transformative moments within the political systems of Latin America. They reconfigure power relations, enhance legislative cohesion, and foster realignment among political actors, ultimately contributing to a recalibrated governance structure.

Not only these findings challenge conventional narratives about interruptions as democracy-threatening phenomena, but they also contest the traditional conceptualization of presidential systems as rigid structures with fixed terms, offering a more nuanced perspective that highlights the dual nature of removals as both taxing and opportunities for political renewal.

The frequent use of interruptions as strategic tools indicates a level of flexibility and adaptability more characteristic of parliamentary systems, particularly concerning the executive's dependency on legislative confidence and the potential for mid-term government changes without systemic collapse. This versatility may reflect the political elites' strategic incorporation of interruptions into their programmatic beliefs, recognizing them as legitimate mechanisms for realigning power dynamics and advancing policy agendas.

1.1 Mixed Concepts of Presidential Interruption

In this dissertation, I use the term “presidential interruptions” to refer to instances in which a president is removed from office before completing their term. This phenomenon includes a range of mechanisms by which a president’s mandate may end prematurely, such as resignation, impeachment, a declaration of incapacity, or even an extralegal ouster — excluding only cases of illness or death. Presidential interruptions, therefore, is a broad, umbrella term that captures any form of early executive exit.

But just like in other fields of study, there is a plethora of synonyms to describe the same object. “Hierarchical Linear Models”, “Mixed Effect Models”, “Mixed Error-component Models”, “Mixed Models” and “Multi-Level Models” are all terms referring to statistical tools that fundamentally share the same structure and function. The differences in terminology often reflect the aspect of the model that the author wishes to highlight, be it hierarchy, mixture, or multiple levels of analysis.

Likewise, in the context of this study, terms like “removal” (Pérez-Liñán, 2007), “ousting” (Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2017; Llanos & Pérez-Liñán, 2021), “fall” (Hochstetler, 2007) and “breakdown” (Hochstetler, 2011; Llanos & Marsteintredet 2010) will be employed to refer to the broader category of presidential interruptions, allowing

subtle shifts in emphasis and offering stylistic variety *without altering the core concept of an executive's premature exit*.

It is worth noting that the existing literature does not adhere to strict distinctions between these terms, often using them interchangeably to describe any form of early executive exit, regardless of the precise mechanism. This variety reflects the diversity of experiences across Latin America, where interruptions happen in many shapes and sizes.

While I appreciate the importance of consistency — particularly, of course, in academic writing —, my use of interchangeable terms for presidential interruption is a deliberate choice to enhance narrative engagement without sacrificing clarity. By alternating between synonyms when discussing the general concept of early executive exit, I aim to keep the prose engaging while still retaining the intended meaning.

1.2 *Dealing the cards*

Presidential interruptions have become a recurring feature of Latin America's political landscape, marking the region as particularly fecund for this kind of phenomenon. Between 1980 and 2023, from 19 to about 23 — depending on who you ask — heads of state across eighteen countries have been ousted mid-term, a strikingly high number that shows just how distinctive presidential politics is in the region. These events are not confined to isolated contexts, but form part of a broader pattern shaped by institutions and the repertoire of tactics of Latin America's political elites. Despite their frequency, the implications of these interruptions remain contested: are they a reflection of democratic fragility, or do they demonstrate adaptability and resilience?

The significance of presidential interruptions lies in their transformative potential. Unlike routine elections, which often solidify existing power structures, removals disrupt the status quo, creating an intentional political vacuum that must be filled through recalibrations of executive-legislative relations and new coalitional alignments. These moments are far from random. As this dissertation demonstrates, interruptions emerge from a confluence of strategic calculations by political elites, who capitalize on institutional arrangements and contextual strokes of luck, such as protests, scandals, or economic

crises. This underscores the need to view interruptions not as aberrations but as integral to the functioning of presidential systems in Latin America.

The prevalence of incumbent falls can be linked to the inherent challenges of presidentialism in the region, particularly the rigidity of fixed terms and the high stakes of executive power. The "winner-takes-all" nature of these systems exacerbates tensions between the branches of government, especially in contexts where minority governments and fragile coalitions are the expected norm. Latin America's multiparty systems often lead to presidents governing without stable majorities, increasing the likelihood of executive-legislative conflict. In such environments, interruptions demonstrably serve as a mechanism for resolving disputes, redistributing power, and recalibrating governance structures.

Removals also hold significance for democratic resilience. While they may appear destabilizing in the short term or through the magnifying glass of the media, they often reinforce constitutional frameworks and coalition building. By providing a means of addressing loss of confidence in the government without resorting to tanks, they reflect an evolving institutionalization of democracy in the region.

Moreover, interruptions drive policy realignment by reshaping the ideological and institutional landscape. As this dissertation shows, the aftermath of removals is characterized by efforts to consolidate power within the executive branch while fostering legislative cohesion. These adjustments are not mere reactions to "crises", but deliberate and valid strategies by political actors to advance their policy agendas. By adjusting the scales of power, presidential falls often create opportunities for systemic renewal, allowing for the relocation of priorities and the reconfiguration of political coalitions.

This dissertation builds on and extends the existing literature on presidential interruptions and executive-legislative dynamics in significant ways. While earlier studies by Pérez-Liñán (2007) and Hochstetler (2011) have laid the groundwork for understanding the triggers of interruptions, here the focus shifts toward their consequences, exploring how oustings reshape the national political landscape. By integrating insights from comparative politics, institutional theory, and game theory, the dissertation offers a multi-

dimensional analysis that captures the strategic, institutional, and ideological dimensions of interruptions.

Inspired by Helmke's (2017) work, I employ game-theoretic modeling to analyze the strategic interactions that precede and follow removals. The model captures the calculated decisions of the leading players — the incumbent government, opposition, and legislature — highlighting how their preferences and strategies shape outcomes and, more importantly, expectations. By framing interruptions as the result of rational, utility-maximizing behavior rather than purely reactive events from Machiavellian actors, the dissertation provides a nuanced understanding of the strategic underpinnings of executive reshuffling.

Theoretically, this work strives to advance the understanding of presidential interruptions, institutional adaptability, legislative strengthening, and presidentialism in Latin America by reframing these phenomena not as anomalies but as integral components of a living political system. This perspective challenges entrenched narratives, which often cast removals as malaises indicative of democratic fragility or systemic failure, and instead situates them as pivotal moments of political inflection.

Pérez-Liñán's (2005) exploration of congressional supremacy in Latin America offers a foundational perspective for this study's theoretical framework. The author argues that democratization processes have curtailed executive dominance by reducing military intervention and eliminating authoritarian constitutional tools that enabled executives to dissolve congress. This shift has elevated the legislature's role in governance, particularly during extreme executive-legislative confrontations.

The findings of this dissertation resonate with this argument. The consistent increase in legislative constraints on the executive and incumbent dependency on legislative confidence throughout the decades, but especially during pre-interruption periods, reflects a recalibration of power dynamics, wherein legislatures strategically leverage their constitutional tools — such as impeachment and other means of removal — not merely as virtuous measures of accountability but as proactive efforts to assert institutional authority. Moreover, the persistence of heightened legislative oversight post-

interruption, albeit at reduced levels, highlights the lasting impact of removals in reshaping executive-legislative relations as their effects ripple through inter-branch relations.

At the heart of this theoretical contribution is the concept of institutional adaptability. The increasing legislative assertiveness documented in the literature, from Llanos & Pérez-Liñán's (2021) analysis of impeachment resolutions as tools for strategic signaling to Sánchez Gayosso & Escamilla Cadena's (2017) exploration of legislative proactivity, reveals a pattern of adaptation where oustings are embedded within the political toolkit. This dissertation extends these arguments by demonstrating how interruptions not only reflect but actively shape institutional trajectories, fostering legislative strengthening and redefining presidentialism in the region.

The hypothesis that interruptions catalyze a reconfiguration of the political landscape, increasing government concentration and legislative cohesion, also speaks to this adaptability. The increase in government concentration post-interruption pinpoints the executive's strategic response to the precariousness of post-confrontational governance. By consolidating legislative support and strengthening coalition unity, new administrations seek to stabilize their positions, mitigate vulnerabilities, and face possible challenges. This aligns with De Micheli & Sanchez-Gomez's (2022) findings on the role of fragile alliances in shaping interruption dynamics, illustrating how coalition politics evolve in response to internal dissent.

As a methodological approach, this dissertation adopts a combination of theoretical modeling and empirical analysis. The game-theoretic framework provides a structured lens through which to analyze the sequential strategic interactions between the executive, opposition, and legislature, with clear utilities and payoff expectations. This framework captures the incentives and constraints that drive political behavior in the context of agenda struggles.

This work is structured into six sections. This introductory chapter presents the central research question and hypothesis, contextualizing the phenomenon of interruptions within the broader debates on democratic stability and adaptability. It also outlines the theoretical and methodological contributions of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on presidential interruptions, executive-legislative dynamics, and democratic resilience. It identifies gaps in the existing scholarship and situates the dissertation's contributions within the broader theoretical landscape. Next, Chapter 3 presents the game-theoretic model, detailing the strategic interactions between political actors and the assumptions underlying the framework. It also discusses the theoretical predictions and hypothesis generated by the model and their implications for understanding interruptions.

Chapter 4 outlines the research design and presents the variables employed in the empirical Chapter 5, which presents the analysis results organized into thematic blocks that address the research questions and hypotheses. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation, synthesizing the findings and discussing their implications.

2 FOUNDATIONS AND FAULT LINES: A LANDSCAPE OF THE LITERATURE

Very different from the literature on the causes of presidential interruptions, which has matured into a strong field of study, the research agenda on the consequences of this phenomenon is still evolving. For quick reference, Table 1 synthesizes some of the most prominent studies on the *causes* of removals in Latin America, what variables they have pointed out as relevant explanatory factors of the phenomenon, and the number of publications where they appeared as pertinent. Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list. The causes can be split into two distinct groups: 1) exogenous variables, external, independent from institutions; and 2) endogenous variables, derived from institutions, dictating the rules of the political game.

Therefore, the existing literature on presidential interruptions significantly leans towards understanding the causes and precursors of these events. This natural epistemological imbalance has resulted in an analytical gap, a considerable void in comprehensively addressing the aftermath and broader implications of removals on the political systems.

Now, strictly for the *outcome* of interruptions, beyond studies on their repercussions for economic performance and democracy (Hochstetler & Samuels, 2011; Marsteintredet, 2008, 2009, 2014; Llanos & Marsteintredet, 2021), so far, there is a shortage of literature that narrow the scope down to a particular sociopolitical sphere, institutional arrangement or policymaking dynamic.

In other words, the field currently lacks studies with a clear dependent variable in which to observe the effects of the phenomenon thoroughly. More critically, the literature is yet to delve into mid-level consequences, such as the effects on legislative agenda setting, inter-branch relations, and the strategic behavior of political parties and actors — essential spheres for understanding the practical implications of presidential interruptions on the day-to-day functioning of governance.

Table 1 – Variables commonly associated with presidential crises and interruptions

	Variables	Effects	#
Exogenous	Broad and frequent protests	If focused on the president, may weaken their position. It also puts them in a dilemma, where both repressing and turning a blind eye are suboptimal options.	15 ¹
	Scandals	Can involve the president or their close allies, eroding the head of state's image. Their direct effects are hard to measure, though research suggest that political capital can counteract some of the unwanted repercussions.	12 ²
	Economic crisis	Weakens the Chief Executive's popularity, magnifying whatever other difficulties they may be facing.	8 ³
	Inaptitude	Presidents that refuse or are ineffective in their coalition management see themselves isolated, unable to properly fight against the opposition's incursions.	5 ⁴
Endogenous	Minority in congress	If supported by the congress, presidents facing crises can resist most adversities. On the other hand, minority governments have to deal with challenges from a disadvantaged position.	9 ⁵
	Hostile opposition	An opposition unwilling to play by the rules in order to implement its policies may opt for undemocratic strategies.	6 ⁶
	Fragmentation	A fragmented party system hinders governability and increases uncertainty, making it costly for the president to fish for allies.	4 ⁷
	Competition	Both president and assembly, when directly elected, see themselves as agents of the people, which leads to legitimacy conflicts.	4 ⁸
	Radicalism	Radical forces, on both sides, will find exponentially hard to compromise, leading to institutional paralysis and crisis.	4 ⁹
	Unbalance powers	given by the ratio between the president's formal powers (established by the constitution) and coalitional powers. Authors disagree upon the optimal balance.	4 ¹⁰

Adapted from Marisguia (2021).

¹ (Álvarez & Marsteintredet, 2010; Edwards, 2015; Hochstetler, 2008; Hochstetler & Edwards, 2009; Kim & Bahry, 2008; Pérez-Liñán, 2018, 1998, 2000, 2007, 2008, 2014; Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2013, 2017; Serrafero, 1996; Valenzuela, 2004).

² (Álvarez & Marsteintredet 2010; Aversa 2016; Baumgartner and Kada 2003; Serrafero 1996, 2014; Edwards 2015; Hochstetler 2008; Hochstetler and Edwards 2009; Pérez-Liñán 2014, 1998, 2000, 2007).

³ (Álvarez & Marsteintredet, 2010; Edwards, 2015; Hochstetler, 2008; Hochstetler & Edwards, 2009; Kada, 2003; Kim & Bahry, 2008; Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2017; Serrafero, 2014).

⁴ (Aversa, 2016; Kada, 2003; Pérez-Liñán, 2000; Serrafero, 1996, 2014).

⁵ (Helmke, 2017; Hochstetler, 2008; Hochstetler & Edwards, 2009; Kim & Bahry, 2008; Pérez-Liñán, 2000, 2007, 2008; Valenzuela, 2004).

⁶ (Kada, 2003; Pérez-Liñán, 1998, 2000, 2018; Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2013, 2017).

⁷ (Álvarez & Marsteintredet, 2010; Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2013; Serrafero, 1996; Valenzuela, 2004).

⁸ (Helmke, 2007, 2017; Valenzuela, 2004).

⁹ (Helmke, 2017; Pérez-Liñán, 2018; Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2013).

¹⁰ (Helmke, 2017; Kim & Bahry, 2008; Pérez-Liñán, 2018).

2.1 *Broad consequences*

Works exclusively dedicated to the outcomes of presidential interruptions are few, and can mostly be traced to Marsteintredet (2008, 2014). In his early studies, the author believed removal procedures to be signs of healthy, horizontal accountability, where conflicts were settled before they could reach possible tipping points (2008). By his later works, and under the weight of new observations, he developed a typology of removals using a two-axis framework to explore the motivations and consequences of oustings (Marsteintredet, 2014). This framework helps differentiate the heterogeneity of interruption cases, highlighting variations in both opposition motivations and threat levels to democratic stability.

In the “opposition’s motivations” axis, the author maps each presidential removal based on whether the challenger’s primary incentives stems from policy-related grievances or legal-constitutional grounds. Policy-driven contests would generally arise when the president’s unpopular decisions — often economic in nature — lead to widespread social unrest and popular mobilization. Therefore, interruptions high on this pole are typically instigated by public discontent rather than formal accusations of misconduct. By contrast, legal-constitutional challenges focus on the president’s alleged violations of democratic norms or constitutional limits, such as corruption, abuse of power, or attempts to bypass the rules of the game. In these cases, the opposition would leverage formal institutional channels to initiate ousting procedures.

In the second axis, “degree of threat to democracy”, Marsteintredet assesses each interruption based on the extent to which democratic norms and processes are compromised by either the president or the opposition. This degree of threat is measured on an ordinal scale from 0 to 5, which evaluates the undemocratic behavior of both the president and the opposition. A score of 0 represents minimal or no undemocratic actions — for example, a president is removed following impeachment procedures to the letter. A score of 5, conversely, indicates severe undemocratic behavior — cases in which either the president or the opposition resorts to extreme measures like military coups and suppression of normative democratic processes.

Although Marsteintredet identifies that “[t]he battle to remove a president is a struggle for power” (2014, p. 177), his typology remains primarily focused on the implications of interruptions for democratic regime stability rather than the dynamics of inter-branch conflicts themselves. That is, his analysis does not delve deeply into how these interruptions affect the power balance between branches, nor does it explicitly explore the strategic maneuvering that might occur between them. Instead, the author’s framework centers on whether interruptions serve as corrective measures for democratic integrity or lead to democratic erosion.

He concludes that interruptions motivated by policy challenges, particularly those spurred by social unrest and popular mobilization, often fail to resolve the underlying crisis, as they address only the immediate removal of a leader without satisfying broader demands for policy changes, leading to continued instability. In contrast, interruptions motivated by legal-constitutional concerns, especially when the president is seen as violating democratic norms, would restore political stability more effectively.

During investigations into the causes of presidential interruptions, various authors have naturally considered the consequences of this phenomenon, primarily for democratic institutions as a whole, though without further systematic examination. As a result, the specialized literature often only hypothesizes about the consequences of interruptions as a byproduct of research into its causes.

For instance, Kim & Bahry (2008) highlight that removals do not necessarily result in the end of democratic governance. In most regions, except for sub-Saharan Africa, democracies tend to survive these form of political conflicts. This distinction accentuates the resilience of Latin America’s democratic institutions in the face of executive “instability”.

The same conclusion can be drawn from Hochstetler & Samuels (2011). The authors argue that the measurable impact of removals on political stability, economic performance, and social conditions are generally minimal and transient. The study asserts that civilian-led challenges to presidents, even when successful, pose minimal threats to the broader system. Instead, according to them, these challenges may serve as a practical solution to governance stresses under the separation of powers, suggesting an inherent

flexibility within presidential democracies to address and quickly recover from opposition-government feuds.

Sánchez Gayosso & Escamilla Cadena (2017) suggest that presidential oustings have led to changes in the executive-legislative status quo, shifting the balance of power in the region. Their analysis implies that the use of constitutional mechanisms for removals, while potentially stabilizing in the short term, raises questions about the long-term impacts on democratic governance.

Helmke (2017) discusses the implications for democratic institutions, highlighting a dual possibility: on one hand, early removals can serve as a corrective mechanism, strengthening horizontal accountability and rooting out corruption. On the other hand, they can undermine democratic stability and the rule of law, particularly if used opportunistically for partisan gain rather than genuine constitutional breaches. She introduces the concept of "institutional instability traps", where repeated crises fail to strengthen institutions while perpetuating a vicious cycle of instability.

Shifting the focus from interruptions to presidential powers, Pérez-Liñán (2018) posits that the real danger to democratic systems lies in the potential for presidents to amass excessive power, thereby undermining the institutional checks and balances. This concentration of both *de jure* and *de facto* powers within the executive, rather than the act of impeachment itself, would represent the most significant threat to democracy in Latin America. Hence, the misuse of impeachments, though concerning, pales in comparison to the risks posed by executive overreach.

Botello & Barretos (2020) have a less optimistic view. The authors find that interruptions do not alleviate political tensions; instead, conflicts between executive and legislative, as well as animosity from mobilized social groups, persist. For instance, in the cases of Rousseff in Brazil and Kuczynski in Peru, their removals did not immediately reduce political tension among elites. Thus, the authors argue that impeachments cannot be considered tools for resolving deep-seated political crises.

Finally, Llanos & Marsteintredet (2021) propose that removals can reshape the political landscape and influence future electoral outcomes. As stated by them, while

impeachments can temporarily address issues of presidential misconduct, it may not always lead to improved governance or political stability.

While these conclusions cover a broad range of important questions about the impact of interruptions on democracy and governance as a whole, they do not dwell in length on the shifts in political alliances and recalibrations of power that often follow. The consequences of removals for the agenda-setting arena, therefore, are still elusive.

2.2 Neither Capitol nor Westminster: Presidentialism a lo latino

It is almost a cliché — of which I’m guilty — to contrast the current state of executive-legislative relations in the region with Linz’s theoretical perspectives. Juan Linz’s (1990; 1994) influential perspective, which highlighted the inherent structural risks of presidential systems for democratic stability, particularly in the context of Latin America, has served as a foundational reference point for scholarly debate. However, the empirical political landscape of the region calls for a nuanced examination on the actual “perils” of presidentialism.

The Linzian critique of presidentialism highlighted supposed structural vulnerabilities in presidential systems that should predispose them to instability and, in the worst-case scenario, democratic breakdown. Linz (1990) argued that the fixed terms, dual legitimacy, and winner-take-all nature of presidential elections could foster zero-sum politics, possibly leading to gridlock and institutional crisis.

More specifically, presidential systems would be prone to conflicts instead of collaboration since the separation of powers would ensure the survival of the Chief Executive independently of legislative support. Moreover, the nature of presidential politics, in theory, would allow presidents to position themselves as interpreters of national interest, overshadowing legislators’ narrower parochial concerns. Lastly, the structure of presidential elections, being a winner-takes-all scenario, makes presidency indivisible, “the ultimate political prize”, which could not be shared in coalition terms, potentially leading to a situation where the victorious candidate gains all executive power, leaving the loser with no political role.

However, recent decades of Latin American presidentialism provide a counterpoint to this perspective. Not only 1) coalitions within presidential systems have been widely observed, but also 2) several presidential interruptions without democratic breakdowns have occurred. Far from the disjunction “cooperation *or* conflict” viewpoint, presidentialism in the region has shown an impressive adaptability, maintaining democracy through a fuzzy, complex conjunction of “cooperation *and* conflict”.

As such, presidential “crises” or “instabilities” are usually defined, throughout the literature, by circumstances where executive and legislative branches clash, attempting to terminate one another (Pérez-Liñán, 2007) or transform the opponent’s composition (Helmke, 2017). I sustain that these terms, when addressing most cases of presidential interruptions, are misguided. Of course, crises and instabilities can and will always occur — but retroactively, after the heat of the moment, it is important to label them as such only if their outcome negatively impacted the minimalist concept of democracy, that is, a “system in which citizens collectively decide by whom and, to some extent, how they will be governed. This feature is definitional: A regime is democratic if and only if people are free to choose, including to remove, governments” (Przeworski, 2024, pp. 5).

If any heightened dispute between government and opposition is a “crisis”, the term ends up losing its meaning; and the real, institutional-damaging crisis is heuristically lost in a sea of innumerable “crises”. It is, certainly, very difficult to distinguish simple disputes from real instabilities in the moment they are happening. Moreover, political discourse, often, tends to be pessimistic and prone to sensationalism — negativity generates engagement, after all. Thus, empirically accurate labeling of inter-branch power dynamics can only be made in hindsight, within the confinement of a research’s temporal scope, in order to reflect a more pragmatic view of political elite’s self-interested strategies.

For instance, it was widely accepted that minority governments and deadlock situations might be detrimental to presidential democracies in Latin America — not coincidentally, these variables are also highly correlated by the literature with presidential interruptions (Marisguia, 2021). However, contrary to common assumptions, neither minority governments nor deadlocks have a deleterious effect on the survival of these regimes, as shown by Cheibub (2002). The author shifts the focus from the presumed

destabilizing effects of these variables to a broader inquiry into the structural and institutional factors underpinning the resilience of presidential systems in the region. / *propose that the same must be done for presidential interruptions.*

Hochstetler & Samuels (2011), comparing the impact of elected versus unelected, and unchallenged versus challenged Latin American presidents on multiple subcomponents of the International Country Risk Guide Index, find “no evidence of a systematic breakdown of legitimacy, no serious disruption of governance, and no evidence of erosion of presidentialism as a regime type” (p. 141) after presidential challenges and interruptions.

Furthermore, the recent wave of presidential interruptions possibly shows a decrease in the executives’ discretion to rule vis-à-vis an increase in the congresses’ control (Sánchez Gayosso & Escamilla Cadena, 2017), preventing the consolidation of extreme executive powers, which would be the main reason for executive-legislative crises in the region. Pérez-Liñán (2005), at the start of the 21st century, suggested that democratization processes had fundamentally altered the traditional dynamics of presidential regimes by curtailing the executive’s ability to easily bypass or dissolve legislative bodies. This shift led to a new pattern where congress, rather than the executive, often emerges victorious in conflicts, signaling a move towards congressional supremacy.

I argue that removals reflect the adaptability and strengthening of Latin America’s congresses, rather than a failure of presidential democracy in the region. These interruptions highlight the flexibility of Latin American presidentialism in managing inter-branch tensions through institutional channels without collapsing, muddying the waters of what is defined as “stability” or “instability”. I seek to call attention to the tactical use of presidential interruptions as a tool for legislative control. The strategic incorporation of oustings into the political calculus of oppositions signifies a sophisticated development of strategies within the legislative branch, reflecting the “growing pains” of Latin America’s presidential systems. Removals, thus, are not antithetical to democratic ideals but can be understood as a *defining characteristic of most presidential systems in the region*. Neither inherently good nor bad. Just one more tool.

This is not to say, of course, that presidential interruptions solve political crises, being a panacea for all inter-branch instabilities. This is definitely not the case; *per se*, interruptions are not tools capable of leading to improved governance or political harmony. Not a single political tool, formal or informal, can constrain human self-interest nor fix entrenched, persistent political vulnerabilities. No number of presidential interruptions will ever fix Peru's deep-rooted institutional shortcomings. The point being made here is threefold:

1. Removals, by themselves, have not been the bogeyman some feared them to be. They might not resolve crises, but they do not represent a risk to democracy;
2. Latin America's political elites have been using interruptions as political instruments in the pursuit of their agenda and political interests for decades, and not as accountability tools.
3. The specialized literature often conceptualizes inter-branch conflicts as "crises" — particularly when the outcome is presidential interruption —, mudding the waters between real democratic threats and strategic behavior.

The removal of ill-fated presidents without shattering the constitutional order has become a distinct feature of the Latin American political game (Pérez-Liñán, 2007), even challenging, according to Llanos & Marsteintredet (2010), the classical theories about what distinguishes presidential from parliamentary systems (e.g. Shugart & Carey, 1992). By now, part of Political Science has developed a quasi-optimistic view of the phenomenon, stating that it might serve as an unexpected tool for democratic stability — not because it settles crises, but because it makes the system less prone to total breakdown. This view originates from the simple notion that the democratic venue of removing presidents, even if through the questionable use of constitutional mechanisms, is always preferred over tanks (Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2017).

2.3 *Realpolitik*

Of course, beyond the institutional realm, it can be stated that removals underscore a moral shortfall among political elites in championing the democratic ideals, especially in the way some interruptions are conducted. For instance, despite the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff having followed all legal procedures to the letter, comes to mind the

indecorous and shameful pronouncement of several Brazilian congressmen prior to casting their votes.

As Marsteintredet (2014) states, one of the main characteristics of presidential regimes should be executive stability. For the author, attempting to impeach a president over policy issues outside election cycles shows that the opposition is not particularly committed to democracy and its ideals, and are willing to bend the rules. Following this line, Llanos & Marsteintredet (2021) affirm that impeachments could pave the way for partisan interests and opportunistic behavior; and, since congress is the main actor judging the president, it would be nearly certain for this tool to become a weapon in political battles.

“[...] impeachments do not fit as a solution to all problems, and even if they could theoretically fit to many, in practice they often do not operate as the constitution dictates. Impeachments are constitutional provisions that act as in-between-election accountability mechanisms against presidential misconduct. Importantly, they are decided by congressional majorities, which entails the risk that they may turn to be ‘[...] regulated more by the comparative strength of parties than by the real demonstrations of innocence or guilt,’ as Alexander Hamilton, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States Constitution, wrote more than 200 years ago (Hamilton 1788)”. (Llanos & Marsteintredet, 2021, 2).

This perspective is better expressed by Sartori’s (1994) definition of “presidential system”. According to the author, in these systems, presidents must 1) be popularly elected; 2) cannot be ousted by congressional vote; and 3) lead the government of which they are incumbent. Focusing on the second attribute, the author states:

“A second defining criterion is that in presidential systems the government, or the executive, is neither appointed nor dismissable via a parliamentary vote. Governments are a presidential prerogative: it is the president that discretionally appoints and discharges cabinet members”. (Sartori, 1994, 84).

Empirically, however, this second norm does not come wholly to fruition in Latin America, and since the ‘80s most presidential interruptions have been strategically used to oust unpopular presidents that failed to build a lasting “legislative shield” (Pérez-Liñán, 2007). As far as reality is concerned, presidents in the region can and are dismissed with no apparent damage to democracy, and at impressive rates. Thus, there is currently a

tug-of-war between empirical observations and the mainstream concept of “presidential system”.

“[...] if a president is challenged by an opposition motivated by the president’s illegal or unconstitutional behaviour, the most important challengers are likely to be institutional since such behaviour qualifies for impeachment, and the crisis is likely to die out almost immediately after the presidential interruption because all the demands of the challengers are met by the presidential removal. If opposition to a president is motivated by a president’s policies, the most important challengers are likely to be street-based since a president cannot be impeached because of political disagreements [...]” (Marsteintredet 2014, 177-178).

This passage — and all conclusions derived from it — is indeed accurate, thoughtful and epistemological fruitful, but only within the confinements of this “presidential system” comprehension, which states that presidents can be rightfully removed if, and only if, they incur in illegal or unconstitutional behavior.

I argue that this concept no longer provides an accurate view of Latin America’s presidentialism, as it overlooks intricate and highly relevant patterns of contemporary executive-legislative interactions in the region. As it is, this ideal construct of “presidentialism” cannot properly capture the region’s political complexities and particularities.

One might assert that interruptions can exist within this notion of presidentialism as long as they serve as accountability tools. After all, as stated by most constitutions, impeachments are instruments of deterrence and punishment against unscrupulous presidents, preventing them from reigning instead of ruling (Valenzuela, 2004), and not weapons in the political tit for tat.

According to Marsteintredet (2008), removal procedures could be signs of healthy, horizontal accountability, where conflicts were settled before they could reach possible tipping points. Later, in a more nuanced analysis, the author distinguishes interruptions based on the political elite’s adherence to democratic values, where the removal of authoritarian and/or corrupt presidents would qualify as an institutional strengthening; whilst interruptions driven by the whims of radicalized oppositions would lead to democratic deterioration (Marsteintredet, 2014). Llanos & Marsteintredet (2021) affirm

that “an impeachment loses legitimacy as a tool of accountability when politics, rather than arresting illegal behaviour, become the sole motivation for removing the president” (p. 2).

But, even if removals are considered useful forms of accountability, observation shows that they neither prevent all illicit activities stemming from the executive — thus failing *ex ante* — nor does it punish all malfeasances after they are discovered — failing *ex post*. Therefore, logic dictates that, empirically, interruptions are not used as accountability tools. As shown by Llanos & Pérez-Liñán (2021), legislators introduce impeachment resolutions more as a means to echo public dissatisfaction with the president, particularly in the context of scandals or poor economic performance, rather than to initiate serious oversight actions.

2.4 Virtue is in the eyes of the beholder

Martínez (2017) states that the stability and quality of democracy in Latin America are not solely dependent on contextual socioeconomic conditions, immediate political scandals, or the precise architecture of political institutions. Instead, democracy’s health depends upon deep historical commitment to democratic principles and the ability of political actors to maintain supportive coalitions; this involves the support presidents have not only from their own party or coalition in the legislature, but also from broader political alliances, ensuring they have enough political capital to navigate challenges without losing their mandates.

It seems rather difficult to distinguish “virtuous democratic principles” from simple “strategy”. Certainly, it is hard to systematically unravel actors’ normative behaviors from their overall pragmatic actions. Even harder is to identify how individuals’ relationships, with their respective preferences and goals, intermingle to influence institutional outcomes. Ideas, surely, are problematic variables in Political Science, as their impalpable essence makes them almost impossible to properly conceptualize and operationalize.

Here, I argue that normative preferences and attitudes are, empirically, equivalent to strategic pursuit of power in a scenario of democratic equilibrium. That is, one’s “virtuous” defense of the democratic ideals is indistinguishable from the pragmatic “self-interested” behavior to play by the rules because any other game would be too

unpredictable. Indeed, as Przeworski (2005) puts it, “situations induced by interests and those generated by culture look the same” (p. 269).

On the spectrum of political ideas, we have on the one hand ideologies too broad and universal to be of any use; while on the other hand we see policy positions too limited to be heuristically relevant. In this sense, the selection of observable implications to detect how strategic behavior impact institutions should be led by the search of mid-level, programmatic beliefs; that is, those ideas that are neither all-encompassing ideologies nor specific policy preferences (Berman, 1998).

Programmatic beliefs stray from simple ideologies by having distinctive boundaries, thus admitting palpable and coherent differentiations, both in kind and degree. By providing implicit or explicit guidelines for practical activities and solutions to everyday problems, these beliefs steer political elites in the direction of their most desirable outcomes, providing a straightforward connection between theory and pragmatic, self-interested action. This implies that actors, operating through programmatic beliefs within an institutional environment, have clear preferences about how outcomes are generated.

What drives them is not only the desire for a certain goal, but the procedures required to achieve it (Frey & Stutzer, 2005). This procedural utility, as the term suggests, is highly utilitarian in nature, functioning as a catalyst to mutual expectations and predictability of intentions. Thus, elites’ adherence to a particular set of programmatic beliefs indicates how they might respond — and more importantly, how they expect others to respond — to distinct situations or challenges (Berman, 1998).

Within this framework, presidential interruptions illustrate a development in the political landscape. I argue that this phenomenon, increasingly prevalent since the last decades of the 20th century, has morphed from being viewed as exceptional political crises to becoming anticipated, almost normalized elements within the strategic calculations of political elites.

This supposed normalization does not imply that such interruptions are universally accepted or desired; rather, it reflects a pragmatic recognition of their potential as a strategic tool or threat in the political arsenal. For political actors, particularly those in

opposition, the possibility of leveraging or threatening the use of presidential removals becomes a tactical consideration embedded within their broader strategy to achieve or maintain power. This strategic incorporation is indicative of the procedural utility these actors attribute to the ousting process: a mechanism that, under certain circumstances, can be legitimately employed to recalibrate or realign the political equilibrium.

The assumption that presidential interruptions has become a part of political actors' programmatic beliefs can be understood through the lens of institutional adaptability and the evolving norms of political engagement in Latin America. As political systems and democratic institutions in the region have matured and faced various stresses, so have the tactics and strategies of political elites evolved. This evolution reflects a broader understanding among elites that the mechanisms of democracy, including its checks and balances, must be flexible and responsive to the changing dynamics of power and governance.

Moreover, the procedural utility of presidential interruptions is reinforced by the broader normative framework within which these actions are contextualized. In democracies where the rule of law and constitutional mechanisms are respected, the use of such interventions is bound by legal and procedural norms, albeit with the usual stretches and "creative" interpretations of the principles and rulings of the constitutions.

It is within this bounded flexibility that political actors find the space to maneuver and align their programmatic beliefs with the pragmatic realities of political life. This alignment points to a sophisticated calibration of strategies, where the procedural paths to achieving goals are as crucial as the goals themselves: control of the legislative agenda.

Thus, it is fairly reasonable to assume that presidential interruptions are less about the righteous upholding of democratic principles and more about political maneuvering. The use of removals to manage and resolve high-stakes political conflicts, leverage negotiations, appeal to the electorate, or simply reshape the legislative arena may represent a unique adaptation of the presidential system to the demands of multiparty governance, where oustings serve as mechanisms for the continual recalibration of political power in the region.

2.5 Interruptions and strategic behavior

In an ideal scenario, to avoid conflicts, elites agree over the issues that can be minimally anticipated and specified under the constitution; and alternate the administrative control of the residual issues — those not explicitly regulated by contract — conforming the results of a random device: electoral competition (Przeworski, 2005). By publicly honoring written contracts, political actors inform each other that they are willing to stay clear of actions that would introduce endogenous shocks in the system.

Most often than not, scholars have leaned towards Shugart & Carey's (1992) influential argument, which states that the more legislative and non-legislative powers presidents have, the less willing they will be to compromise; specially when faced with fragmented or opposite assemblies, which would increase the likelihood of intemperate actions (Cox & Morgenstern, 2001). Unfortunately, few studies go beyond institutional and contextual country-level variables in their models, which narrows the explanatory scope of the field.

In the specialized literature, it is often stated that politically weak executives (low level of support in the assembly) will likely have no chance of implementing their policy goals, thus resorting more frequently to unilateral powers in ways that may be considered “constitutionally provocative”. Those politically stronger, by contrast, resort to these powers less frequently, being able to reach their desired outcomes via working majority in the assembly and the allocation of integrative powers, such as urgency decrees, the appointment of ministers and distribution of pork:

“A president's level of support in the assembly will have a large impact on his overall policymaking strategy, whether to seek mostly a statutory implementation of goals (governing through the assembly) or a nonstatutory implementation (governing around the assembly). This overarching strategic decision about the optimal mix of statutory and nonstatutory effort in turn influences presidential tactics, which powers to use and how to use them. These tactics are also influenced by the president's institutional powers, and thus even presidents in similar circumstances could range from impotent to imperial” (Cox & Morgenstern 2001, p. 177).

Following this logic, Helmke (2017) concludes that strong presidents beget weak institutions, for the size of the gap between presidents' partisan support (*de facto* powers)

and constitutional (*de jure*) powers not only increases their incentives to reign rather than rule, but also encourages the opposition to get rid of those abusing their prerogatives. What motivates legislatures to try their luck against rogue presidents, in this perspective, is a function of the costs and benefits of starting a conflict in relation to the current distribution of policymaking power. The underlying process behind the unilateral ability of presidents to shift the status quo is bound to executive-legislative bargaining; and for a president to succeed in this endeavor, the assembly must acquiesce (Chiou & Rothenberg, 2014).

The more presidents try to expand the status quo in their favor, increasing their policymaking power in relation to the assemblies, the more incentives legislatures will have to get rid of them. Bargaining failures deriving from unfortunate institutional combinations “not only prompt legislatures to seek to oust presidents, but also have the potential to provoke presidents to act preventively by launching attacks of their own” (Helmke 2017, p. 18).

However, conflicts between a constitutionally strong but politically weak president and the assembly would not be the only way to trigger clashes. The problem with *de jure* powerful presidents, according to Pérez-Liñán (2018), can be even worse if they take over other branches. For the author, the Latin American experience in the twentieth century indicates that at the center of most cases of instability are presidents who gain control over the Congress and the Judiciary. This stems from the fact that, differently from the Executive, legislators and judges lack sufficient budgetary resources, security forces and command of patronage to impose credible threats to the democratic institutions. Thus, only the Executive branch could “sustain a lasting process of democratic backsliding when it acts without constraints” (p. 11). On the opposite side of spectrum, institutionally weak presidents would not represent a credible threat, for they lack the capacity and incentives to seize the other branches (Pérez-Liñán, Schmidt & Vairo, 2019).

Helmke (2017), in her deep dive into the strategic behaviors of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches during inter-branch crises in Latin America, argues that presidential interruptions lowers the threshold for future oustings, because previous crises teach both leaders and opposition how to navigate and manipulate institutional

mechanisms to their advantage, reducing the costs and increasing the probability of belligerent legislative actions.

A critical factor in this cycle is the impact of presidential powers intertwined with partisan status. Presidents who possess significant formal (*de jure*) powers but lack robust partisan backing (*de facto* powers), according to the author, become prime targets for interruptions, for the absence of strong coalition support incentivizes opposition actors to pursue removal strategies. Helmke highlights cases where coalition instability precipitated frequent presidential crises — as seen in Ecuador and Bolivia, where presidents often relied on temporary alliances, or "ghost coalitions", which proved challenging to sustain, leading to high stakes and instability.

Building on coalition dynamics, Llanos & Marsteintredet (2021) state that impeachment processes often stem from and contribute to shifts in alliances and coalitions, particularly as congress and opposition groups leverage removals as a political tool. In countries like Peru and Brazil, impeachments have been closely linked to political fragmentation and realignment in response to public dissatisfaction and corruption scandals. Especially in Peru, the series of impeachments and resignations between 2016 and 2021 underscores the volatility and fragmentation within the political system, leading to repeated coalition reshuffles and shifting political alliances, both before and after impeachment proceedings.

De Micheli & Sanchez-Gomez (2022) argue that impeachments are often the culmination of fragile alliances where coalition partners, driven by tactical rather than ideological agreements, withdraw support when the president no longer serves their interests. In Latin America's fragmented party systems, presidents depend on multiparty coalitions that are inherently unstable. Coalition partners may realign their loyalties during crises, scandals, or political conflicts, action that is not merely a reaction to presidential misconduct, but a strategic move to reposition themselves within the political arena. These shifts, according to the authors, have lasting effects on the political environment, influencing policy directions and the stability of future governments.

The trend of increasing legislative assertiveness in Latin America is further explored by Sánchez Gayosso & Escamilla Cadena (2017), who note that as presidents

lose majority support in legislatures, they become vulnerable to impeachment processes or forced resignations. This vulnerability reflects a broader structural shift within the region's presidential systems, moving away from the historical dominance of the executive branch. Since the 1990s, legislatures have adopted more proactive roles, (creatively) utilizing legal mechanisms to hold presidents accountable — or hostages. This shift signifies a realignment of political power, redistributing authority and fostering an environment where legislative bodies act as regulators of executive power, potentially marking a departure from previously unchecked presidential authority and signaling a maturation of democratic institutions where, ideally, checks and balances are more vigorously applied.

On the topic of strategic position-taking, Llanos and Pérez-Liñán (2021) emphasize that legislators often introduce impeachment resolutions not primarily to remove a president, but to signal their alignment to the public, especially amid declining presidential approval. This allows policymakers to express their constituents' outrage, whether due to corruption scandals, economic mismanagement, or other public grievances. These resolutions would function as a form of representation rather than effective, virtuous oversight. By initiating impeachment processes, legislators symbolically distance themselves from an unpopular president, thereby boosting their own public image even if the impeachment goes nowhere — impeachment resolutions correlate more strongly with dips in presidential approval than with actual, concrete legislative outcomes.

The authors demonstrate that these procedures, much like no-confidence motions in parliamentary systems, provide the opposition with leverage to negotiate concessions, and offer the legislature as a whole an opportunity to realign coalitions as presidential popularity wanes. Moreover, position-taking through impeachment resolutions would also be a low-risk strategy in systems where successful impeachments are rare. In Argentina, for instance, numerous impeachment resolutions have, performatively, been introduced over decades, yet none have succeeded in removing a president.

This raises the question: Is legislative assertiveness and strategic behavior during presidential interruptions a distinctive feature of Latin America, reflecting deeper institutional patterns? Across the region, legislatures have become adept at leveraging

presidential instability, using interruptions not only to oust unpopular or embattled leaders but also as tools for political repositioning and coalition bargaining. This trend suggests that Latin American lawmakers are not merely passive actors reacting to crises; instead, they actively engage in strategic maneuvers, often anticipating the potential gains interruptions offer in terms of shifting alliances and public perception.

The frequency of presidential removals alone suggests learned behavior among legislators and opposition groups who, over time, have adapted their tactics to exploit institutional vulnerabilities. By employing impeachment proceedings, calls for resignation, and other mechanisms, lawmakers manipulate the political landscape to realign coalitions, bolster their own legitimacy, and pursue policy concessions. The sheer regularity with which Latin American legislators co-opt institutional tools intended for accountability as weapons in the power struggle between executive and legislative branches suggests that they perceive presidential interruptions as viable, pragmatic solutions rather than as drastic, democracy-shattering measures of last resort.

2.6 *Moving forward*

The usual presidential system conceptual paradigm encompasses a constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and methodological frameworks that still define the field of presidential studies. According to Thomas Kuhn's (1997[1962]) idea of paradigm in the sciences, this overarching framework guides scientists in formulating questions, interpreting results, and defining what constitutes a legitimate scientific problem within the field — until new observations challenge the scientific *status quo*, making room for another paradigm.

Lowi (1992) presents a critical examination of the evolution of American Political Science as deeply intertwined with the development of the American state itself. For him, the discipline is not just an academic field, but a product of the American state, reflecting and reinforcing the political and bureaucratic structures it seeks to study. For instance, the emergence of specific subdisciplines, such as public opinion, public policy, and public choice are closely aligned with the characteristics and needs of the modern, bureaucratized government. The author suggests that each regime tends to produce a Political Science consonant with itself. This consonance between the state and the

discipline can have significant consequences, including a failure to critically evaluate political and institutional shifts.

Lowi, therefore, calls for political scientists to reflect on their discipline's role and to strive for a Political Science that is not only reflective of, but also critical and independent from, the state and the regime that surrounds it.

Likewise, Shapiro (2009) argues against the notion that all observation is inevitably theory-laden, to the unfortunate point where theory-driven descriptions of political phenomena completely overshadow empirical realities. This critique underscores a tendency to prioritize theoretical consistency over empirical validity, potentially leading to a selective engagement with facts that align with pre-existing theoretical frameworks. The author critiques the practice of allowing theories to dictate the terms and conditions under which political phenomena are studied, suggesting that this can lead to a misunderstanding or overlooking of crucial aspects of political reality. He advocates for a more empirically grounded approach that prioritizes the investigation of political phenomena as they are, rather than how they might be conceptualized within a particular theoretical framework.

Hence, by sticking to the current paradigm of presidential system, a study's research question, research design and conclusions are limited by the ideal framing that presidents can be removed only if they represent a danger to democracy, which does not represent Latin American executive-legislative dynamics.

By agreeing that presidential removals must exist, one should also accept its political and strategic facet. Observational Political Science deals with self-interested actors within institutions designed to regulate their interactions, and must acknowledge their strategic behavior as it is, not as it should be. Fundamentally, Political Science as an empirical discipline is "the study of the shaping and sharing of power" (Lasswell & Kaplan 2017[1950], XXVIII).

As stated by Carreras (2012), from the early cautionary notes issued by Linz regarding the potential pitfalls of presidential systems to a more sophisticated comprehension of these institutions, there have been three major developments: an in-

depth exploration of presidentialism, an emphasis on the role of presidential coalitions, and an analysis of impeachment mechanisms. He addresses the shortcomings of initial models in explaining phenomena such as coalition politics and impeachment strategies; and seeks to narrow the divide between theoretical constructs and the actual dynamics of executive-legislative interactions.

By stressing the necessity for theoretical models to continually adapt and more accurately mirror the intricate and changing landscape of executive-legislative relations in Latin America, the author emphasizes the critical need to align theoretical insights to empirical complexities in the study of presidential systems.

Following this reasoning, Mustapic (2010) argues that the conventional attributes of presidential regimes, particularly the fixed term for presidents, need reevaluation in light of the numerous early presidential departures observed. She points out that impeachment and resignation illustrate a dependency of presidents on congressional support to remain in power; suggesting that, contrary to traditional beliefs, the permanence of Chief Executives in office is not solely determined by the electoral mandate, but also significantly influenced by the level of support or opposition they face in congress.

Moreover, the author underscores the significance of not being able to dissolve congress as a defining element of presidentialism, contrasting with parliamentary systems where the executive can dissolve Parliament under certain conditions. This inability to dissolve congress, according to Mustapic, encapsulates the essence of the political dynamics within presidential systems and the legislature's potential to influence or even terminate a presidency.

Since 1) we cannot bend political institutions nor uphold political actors to the current conceptual paradigm; and 2) presidential interruptions fail as accountability mechanisms for addressing issues of executive misconduct; it is reasonable to state that impeachments can be viewed, and potentially reformed, as a “vote of non-confidence” akin to the one found in parliamentary systems (Llanos & Nolte, 2016). The benefits are twofold.

First, replacing impeachment with a vote of non-confidence would shift the focus of political debates from the normative domain, which often centers on the moral integrity and personal misconduct of the president, to a more political, programmatic, and partisan related discourse — thus, in line with how they are *actually* used in Latin America. As we've seen, the region's experiences highlight the adaptability of its presidential systems, which can incorporate elements of flexibility in moments of significant stresses, maintaining democracy alive through constitutional mechanisms.

This change in focus could lead to a more substantive engagement with the policies, governance style, and political strategies of both government branches. By emphasizing programmatic and political considerations, the process for resolving inter-branch power dynamics could become more transparent and focused on governance issues, potentially leading to a more stable political environment, and contributing to the cumulative institutional political knowledge. Changes in executive leadership would be clearly linked to political performance and support rather than legal or ethical controversies that, more often than not, are fabricated and lead nowhere.

Second, this change could enhance the political legitimacy, procedural clarity, and overall sincerity of the removal process in the eyes of both political actors and society as a whole. The incumbent president would be judged for what really is the core of the problem — their loss of legitimacy —, and not for an *ad-hoc* excuse based on shaky legal grounds. In this scenario, zealous claims of *coup d'état* by government loyalists amidst interruption procedures would be empty of meaning, since the discourse surrounding the ousting would be mostly programmatic and openly policy related, with not much room for struggles over the legality of the removal.

This is not the first time it has been stated that presidential systems could learn a thing or two from parliamentarism. Colomer & Negretto (2005) affirm that, by borrowing elements from parliamentary systems, such as giving presidents limited legislative powers and encouraging stronger party discipline within the legislature, presidential systems could achieve better level of governance efficiency and stability. Their analysis suggests a pathway towards enhancing the functionality of presidential systems without fundamentally altering their nature.

I argue against the pessimistic perspective that views presidential interruptions, by themselves, as inherently destabilizing for democracies in Latin America. If we contrast the region's political landscape with Juan Linz's theoretical framework, which posits inherent structural vulnerabilities in presidential systems leading to potential instability and democratic breakdown, we end up exposing quite the opposite situation: an impressive adaptability and resilience of the nations' presidentialism systems in face of presidential challenges.

I also assert that, just as literature has evolved to address the inconsistencies between the Linzian theory and the observed realities of executive-legislative relations in Latin America by focusing on the study of presidential coalitions and the analysis of impeachment processes (Carreras, 2012), so too must the definition of presidential system adapt to what is *de facto* practiced by political actors in the region. In order to sustain this view, from now on, I will not label all inter-branch conflicts as "crises", but any other synonym of "conflicts".

Finally, I seek to shift interruption's focus from a normative domain, centered on the moral integrity of government and opposition, towards a more political, programmatic, and partisan discourse. This change could lead to a more substantive and sincere engagement with governance issues and contribute to a more stable and less hypocritical political environment. Such a move could further depersonalize political conflicts, removing the need of improvised and highly questionable legal interpretations to oust a president, thus focusing on public debates on governance and policy, enhancing the legitimacy and transparency of the process.

3 PLAYING THE HAND: STRATEGIC CALCULUS IN LEGISLATIVE-EXECUTIVE INTERPLAYS

This chapter aims to lay the foundations for the hypotheses about the consequences of presidential interruptions. By modeling the strategic calculations that shape legislative-executive dynamics in Latin America, particularly during conflicts, it examines how elite strategies, institutional structures, and the precarious context of minority governments jointly foster conditions ripe for friction, highlighting that presidential interruptions are often the outcome of calculated moves by political actors who view removals not merely as responses to misconduct, but as tools to achieve their goals.

Therefore, logically, the consequences of the phenomenon are intrinsically linked to its institutional causes. To understand the former, we must first comprehend the latter. By modeling pre-interruption interactions, we have a picture of how presidential power is continuously negotiated and, in some cases, strategically undermined by opposition forces and coalition partners alike. More importantly, we can also unveil their expectations and, thus, hypothesize about the consequences of their actions. Beyond that, it also allow us to model the aftermath of presidential removals, that is, what should we expect from political interactions post-interruption.

In contexts where governments operate without a stable legislative majority, strategic maneuvering by political elites becomes essential for both survival and influence. Political actors — the executive, opposition, and legislature — engage in pragmatic, calculated strategies that blur the line between self-interest and normative ideals. As we have seen, Helmke (2007) argues that clashes between branches of government are not accidental, but the product of intentional, strategic decisions. In high-stakes environments, elites weigh the costs and benefits of confrontation carefully, aiming to maximize their control over the agenda-setting landscape. As a result, presidential interruptions reflect more than a breakdown of executive power; they embody the competing interests, tactical calculations, and sometimes tenuous coalitions that define legislative-executive dynamics in the region.

In the following model, three primary players emerge, each with distinct preferences: the incumbent government, the opposition, and the legislature. The

government, represented by the president and their coalition, aims to stay in power while pursuing policies close to their ideological position. The opposition, on the other hand, seeks to replace the incumbent, viewing the president's weakened position as an opportunity to assert its own ideological stance. Meanwhile, the legislature operates as a balancing force, whose preferences hinge on policy alignment and stability. As De Micheli and Sanchez-Gomez (2022) suggest, the legislature's willingness to align with or oppose the executive depends significantly on the configuration and stability of multiparty coalitions. When these coalitions lack ideological cohesion, intra-coalitional politics can escalate minor disagreements into full-fledged power struggles, especially if the executive fails to maintain support through concessions or coalition-building efforts.

By showing that elite's strategies shape disputes and interruptions, I establish that we should also expect to see consequences of the aftermath of conflicts in the agenda-setting environment in which (and for which) government and opposition act. This logic follows a simple structure.

Political actors' pragmatic strategies to control the agenda-setting landscape are necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for inter-branch clashes. Government-opposition turmoil is driven by a configuration between political self-interest, constitutional framework, and contextual institutional conditions. Therefore, the calculated interaction between elites in the legislative space is the decisive factor for the survival or fall of mandates. Although other variables like economic performance, scandals and social turmoil might be important, by themselves, they are neither necessary nor sufficient to oust a president.

I also assume that presidential interruptions are regarded by political elites as strategic instruments rather than mere reactions to misconduct. Far from being the virtuous instruments for deterrence and accountability idealized by constitutions to safeguard democracy from unscrupulous presidents, removals have become nothing more than political tools akin to the vote of non-confidence of parliamentary systems, impacting actors' strategies accordingly.

The opposition seeks specific gains by ousting a president — otherwise, it would not risk such a costly and dangerous course of action. This assumption suggests that

removals function as an implicit, tacit rule, understood by both incumbents and opposition, who adjust their tactics accordingly. Thus, the opposition and legislature rarely incur the high costs of an interruption without the expectation of tangible benefits.

Moreover, the dynamics within legislative-executive interactions often reflect the dynamic foundations of Latin American coalitional politics. Marsteintredet & Ugglå (2019) argue that executive cohesion hinges on alignment between presidents and their vice-presidents, particularly when they belong to different parties. Internal division between these actors might create a fault line within the executive branch that, if exploited by the legislature or opposition, can lead to governance issues. This highlights the importance of strategical thinking in a system that is fluid and everchanging in nature, where coalition partners and legislators leverage their positions to influence or disrupt executive power. When vice-presidents belong to different parties or have adversarial relationships with the president, the risk of presidential interruptions rises, leading to broader governmental dysfunction and negatively affecting governance and policy implementation.

In this high-stakes game, each player's strategy is determined by a combination of self-interest, ideological alignment, and tactical calculation. The incumbent government must decide whether to appease the legislature through policy concessions or assert its autonomy, understanding that both options carry significant risks. For the opposition, the decision to initiate an interruption involves weighing the potential gains of power against the costs of failure. As Helmke (2007) suggests, elites carefully calculate the likelihood of success before launching a challenge, making interruptions a product of strategic, rather than reactive, behavior. Finally, the legislature, which holds the decisive power to support or oppose interruption proceedings, evaluates its own ideological distance from the incumbent and opposition, prioritizing stability and policy gains.

As shown by De Micheli & Sanchez-Gomez (2022), intra-coalitional dynamics, rather than external pressures alone, are central to initiating impeachment processes, given that the outcomes of impeachment attempts are heavily shaped by the internal politics of multiparty, ideologically diverse coalitions. Formed through fragile agreements, these interactions are stressed during crises, scandals, or mass protests, and presidents can survive such challenges by addressing allies' interests and preserving coalition unity.

However, in the absence of major threats, presidents may be ousted if they fail to satisfy their coalition's interests, leading allies to view impeachment as either an opportunity to seize power or just means of self-preservation. Micheli & Sanchez-Gomez illustrate how the internal cohesion of the governing coalition and the president's ability to maintain harmony through negotiation and concession are relevant for their political survival. Such coalitions, when push comes to shove, reveal the centrality of the political landscape in determining the fate of a presidency.

Thus, this chapter demonstrates that elite actions and strategies significantly impact inter-branch legislative conflicts, leading to interruptions as calculated moves within the broader game of political survival and control. The game-theoretic model presented illustrates how political actors, operating within a constrained institutional framework and a volatile coalition environment, use interruptions to navigate power dynamics and realign agendas. In this landscape, interruptions are not random disruptions, but deliberate, tactical maneuvers designed to recalibrate the political balance between government and opposition forces. By analyzing these calculations, we gain insight into the pre-interruption environment, where the seeds of conflict are sown, and the stage is set for potential shifts in legislative-executive power.

3.1 Game-theoretic simplifications and limitations

Marsteintredet (2014) critiques the tendency to oversimplify presidential interruptions by treating them as identical events, arguing that such simplification overlooks the substantial variation among cases and limits our understanding of executive instability. He contends that interruptions should not be treated as a monolithic concept but instead require a nuanced approach that accounts for the diversity of conditions and triggers across different instances. The author's argument is a caution against oversimplifying removals into a one-size-fits-all framework, emphasizing the need for a sophisticated conceptualization that captures the complexity and diversity of this political phenomenon.

I wholeheartedly agree with Marsteintredet's statements and believe that cautious, nuanced analyses of the different modes of interruptions can only yield fruitful results for the field. Indeed, as Whitehead (1933) posits with the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness",

scientific models and descriptions, which are in essence simplifications of the complex world — natural or otherwise —, are often taken as the whole truth rather than as tools or partial perspectives. By focusing exclusively on simplified, idealized representations, such as mathematical models or reductive classifications, scientists may ignore or undervalue the richer, dynamic and interconnected nature of reality.

But I also believe that this viewpoint, when taken to its logical extreme, may overlook the significant analytical value that generalized, simplifying models can bring to understanding any given phenomenon. Of course, models should never be seen as mirrors of reality, but they can be valued as important tools that help us identify core patterns, regardless of case-specific details.

King, Keohane, & Verba (1994) offer an important perspective, noting that social science necessarily relies on simplification to make sense of complex phenomena. They argue that while events in the social realm are inherently unique and shaped by deep, intricate and interconnected causal histories, social science must develop coherent abstractions that distill key features for analytical clarity. This process does not erase complexity but rather allows researchers to isolate critical factors. Here, the goal is to make statements that apply to the broad class presidential interruptions as well as specific cases of removals, enabling general understanding alongside case-based nuances that can be further investigated through the lenses of the model. This dual objective reflects a central logic that seeks to identify recurrent patterns in presidential interruptions through ideological distance, policy costs, and legislative support, all of which apply across many political systems.

The utility of a model lies in its ability to fulfill its explanatory propositions rather than its fidelity to every detail of reality (Hedström & Swedberg, 2005). Game-theoretic models are particularly valuable in this regard, as they enable systematic predictions about actors' strategic responses under given conditions. The simplification serves this dual goal by making explicit the strategic options available to political actors, and analyzing how these options, in turn, shape outcomes. Each player's preferences and strategies may vary in specific instances, yet the game-theoretic approach reveals the

underlying structure common to interruptions, providing clarity in understanding inter-branch conflicts by isolating essential power dynamics.

Hedström & Swedberg reinforce the value of simplification, stating that analytical models must inherently strip away some details to focus on critical mechanisms, in an effort to capture systematic relationships between variables. In this sense, models intentionally select for only the most causally proximate factors to avoid conflating every contributing variable into a chaotic and ultimately uninformative whole. It is important to state that the use of abstraction in game-theoretic models does not ignore real-world complexities; rather, it clarifies them by constructing a clean analytical environment in which strategic interdependence is made explicit.

The model I present here abstracts players' preferences and strategic choices to reveal the structural incentives that define interactions among them. By maintaining a coherent theoretical design, they highlight how different contexts modify their constitutive elements. In other words, the model's systematic constraint enables us to simulate potential outcomes under various conditions, revealing how changes in one factor could significantly alter the equilibrium outcome. This capacity to generalize without losing sight of key variables can offer a great level of practical applicability. Therefore, the systematic simplifications I make are a methodological strength, not a limitation. They enable a coherent analysis of presidential interruptions by focusing on the underlying strategic incentives common to diverse contexts.

For example, when the legislature's ideological alignment is closer to the opposition than the incumbent, the likelihood of interruption increases. This clear — and rather obvious — generalization applies irrespective of specific political histories or personalities, as it stresses a systematic mechanism that can be observed across cases. While each interruption is shaped by its own context, the models reveal how specific conditions function as consistent drivers in the agenda-setting landscape.

Behind this variance are numerous important and highly influential factors. While uncovering the internal mechanisms of this black box is of utmost importance, it is not the primary aim of this work.

Comparative analysis depends on the assumption that units with similar explanatory variables will yield similar outcomes. While clearly simplifying, this approach is a methodological necessity rather than a flaw. It suggests that we can isolate key elements that predictably influence outcomes across comparable units. By focusing on factors that consistently drive interruption outcomes, the model shown here adheres to the principle of homogeneity, supporting generalizable insights across diverse contexts, both pre- and post-interruption.

3.2 *Players and preferences*

Each player in this model — the incumbent government, the opposition, and the legislature — operates with a set of preferences and goals shaped by both institutional constraints and political opportunity.

- The Incumbent Government (*I*): The incumbent government, tasked with upholding a policy agenda, prefers to avoid concessions that deviate from their ideal position. Concessions are not only ideologically undesirable, but can also undermine the president's authority.

Accordingly, the incumbent's primary aim is to retain power and implement their preferred policies without substantial compromise, constantly balancing the need for legislative cooperation against the risks of appearing overly accommodating. Concessions can signal weakness, making the incumbent appear vulnerable to opponents, while also risking discontent within their own political base.

- The Opposition (*O*): For the opposition, political survival hinges on being seen as a viable alternative to the incumbent government. When it senses an opportunity to capitalize on executive vulnerability, it may choose to challenge the president, hoping to gain power by aligning itself more closely with public discontent. However, challenging the incumbent is a costly endeavor, so it typically waits for moments of heightened executive unpopularity, economic strain, or public scandal.

Therefore, for the opposition, the primary objective is to replace the incumbent and redirect policy toward their ideological preferences, always assessing whether the moment is ripe for a challenge.

- The Legislature (*L*): Legislators weigh the benefits of policy alignment with the incumbent versus siding with the opposition. If the incumbent's policy stance deviates too far from the legislature's own priorities, lawmakers may find alignment with the opposition less costly, thus fishing for alternative coalitions.

3.3 *Assumptions*

3.3.1 *Rationality*

Each player in the game — the incumbent government, the opposition, and the legislature — is assumed to be a rational actor, meaning they pursue strategies that maximize their utility based on their preferences and the expected actions of other players. Therefore, each player carefully calculates their strategies and anticipates the potential moves and counter moves of the others.

Admittedly, in reality, political actors do not act wholly rationally. Their behavior are also shaped by bounded rationality¹¹, psychological biases, emotions, personal loyalty, ideological commitments and peer pressure. These elements, collectively, prevent strictly utility-maximizing decisions.

But, while pure rationality may not capture every nuance of human decision-making, it is a reasonable simplifying assumption in game-theoretic models. Political decision-making, especially in high-stakes situations like presidential interruptions, often involves a high degree of strategic calculation, as actors seek to optimize their positions under intense scrutiny and potential costs.

- Example: The opposition and legislature weigh the costs and benefits of challenging the incumbent, while the incumbent evaluates the consequences of appeasing or defying the legislature to retain power.

3.3.2 *Complete information*

In the real world, complete information is rare. Political actors often operate under incomplete or imperfect scenarios, leading to uncertainty about other players' motives,

¹¹ Rationality and decision-making processes limited by natural cognitive limitations, leading to satisfactory choices rather than purely optimal.

preferences, or the likelihood of specific outcomes. The opposition may not fully know the incumbent's internal support, and the legislature may be uncertain about public opinion on impeachment. This uncertainty can lead to more cautious or risk-averse behavior, which may not be captured in the model's predictions.

Here, the presupposition of complete information simplifies the model and allows for clearer equilibrium predictions. By assuming that players are fully informed about the game, the model avoids complexities that arise from information asymmetries, such as signaling and learning dynamics, which could obscure the core strategic interactions. Additionally, in high-stakes situations, political actors often invest significant resources in gathering information, reducing — albeit not eliminating — informational gaps.

Hence, it is assumed that players have complete information about the structure of the game, including knowledge of each other's payoffs, preferences, and available strategies. Consequently, each player is aware of the incentives and potential outcomes for themselves and other players. This enables them to anticipate each other's moves and calculate the optimal strategy for maximizing their utility.

- Example: The incumbent, knowing the preferences and constraints of both the opposition and the legislature, can then choose whether to appease or defy during conflicts.

3.3.3 *Sequential moves*

The model assumes that players make their decisions in a specific order. In this pre-interruption model, the incumbent government acts first, followed by the opposition and then the legislature, each observing the prior moves before deciding on their strategy. This allows for backward induction and provides a subgame-perfect equilibrium, as each player optimizes their decision based on the expected responses of others.

Political actions, empirically, are often more dynamic, with actors responding to each other in real-time and without a fixed order. Also, simultaneous or overlapping moves are common, especially in high-stakes political situations, where rapid responses are required, which the sequential structure does not capture.

With this in mind, a sequential structure simplifies the model and allows for clearer analysis of strategic decision-making. Additionally, in many political situations, actors surely do make decisions sequentially — such as the government enacting policies and the legislature responding with potential challenges — making this a reasonable simplifying assumption.

- Example: The incumbent may choose to appease if they anticipate that the opposition and legislature will challenge them if they defy.

3.3.4 *Utility maximization and preference ordering*

This assumption states that each player has a clearly defined utility function and a consistent ranking of preferences over possible outcomes, which they logically seek to maximize. Although in real political clashes actors have more complex, multifaceted and even contradictory goals, utility maximization is a foundational concept in game theory, as it enables clear and structured analysis of strategic decision-making. These preferences are also static, and do not change based on previous moves or evolving political contexts.

In cases where the incumbent's perceived value of holding office equals the costs of making policy concessions, they receive the same utility from both appeasing and defying, thus finding themselves indifferent between the two options. In this scenario, the model deterministically defaults to “appease”, reflecting a desire to maintain stability. This avoids modeling complex, probabilistic games that incorporate tie-breaking mechanism.

Beyond the technical mathematical reason, this choice is grounded in the incumbent's preference for minimizing potential risks associated with defiance. By choosing to appease, they avoid provoking further conflict and demonstrate willingness to compromise, prioritizing actions that sustain political continuity and reducing the likelihood of dangerous confrontations.

- Example: The incumbent government prefers to stay in power with or without making concessions, the opposition seeks to gain power, and the legislature desires alignment between the executive and legislative branches. If the value of holding office is the same as making concessions, the default behavior is to appease.

3.4 *Game structure: Strategy and sequence of moves*

The structure of the game reflects the sequential nature of decision-making in the lead-up to a potential presidential interruption. Players make decisions in a specific order, with each actor observing the actions of previous players before choosing their own strategy. This sequential arrangement allows for predictability of intentions and anticipation of expected outcomes.

The game begins with the incumbent's decision, followed by the opposition's and concluding with the legislature's. Each step represents a critical juncture in the agenda-setting landscape, where each actor weighs the costs and benefits of their choices in light of the previous moves.

3.4.1 *Incumbent (I)*

- *Appease (A)*: By choosing to appease, the incumbent signals a willingness to align with the preferences or demands of the lawmakers, often at the expense of deviating from their ideal policy stance. Appeasement might involve policy compromises, legislative concessions, or other actions that bring the government's agenda closer to that of the overall legislature in order to prevent potential challenges, particularly from the opposition.
- *Defy (D)*: Alternatively, the incumbent can choose to defy, opting to pursue their own policy agenda without considering the legislature's or opposition's preferences. By defying, the president prioritizes their policy objectives and ideological commitments over maintaining harmony with other political actors. However, defying may increase the ideological distance between the government and the legislature, potentially prompting the opposition to initiate a challenge.

3.4.2 *Opposition (O)*

- *Challenge (C)*: If the opposition chooses to challenge, they initiate formal proceedings to remove the incumbent from power. This decision is a direct response to the president's earlier action and is typically provoked by the incumbent's choice to defy. By doing so, the opposition seeks to leverage the legislature's support to unseat the incumbent, motivated by the potential to gain power or influence policies closer to their ideological preferences. The choice to

challenge is a significant escalation, as it implies that the challengers are willing to incur the non-trivial political costs of mobilizing against the government.

- Not Challenge (NC): Alternatively, the opposition may decide to acquiesce. This choice often reflects the high costs of challenging the incumbent, which outweigh the potential benefits. By not challenging, they allow the president to remain in power unopposed, likely waiting for a more favorable moment or a change in circumstances before acting. This option reflects the opposition's pragmatic choice to conserve political capital and avoid confrontation when the likelihood of success is low, or the costs are too high.

3.4.3 Legislature (L)

- Support Incumbent (S_I): If the legislature chooses to shield the government, they vote against the interruption proceedings, allowing the president to remain in power. This decision implies that the legislature finds the incumbent's governance tolerable or aligned enough with their own preferences to avoid the disruption of ousting procedures. Supporting the government may reflect a calculation by the legislature that the costs of removing the president — such as political instability or public backlash — are greater than the benefits. Additionally, the legislature's support may be influenced by other strategic considerations, such as ideological alignment with the incumbent or a desire to avoid empowering the opposition.
- Support Opposition (S_C): Conversely, the legislature may choose to back the opposition, effectively endorsing the removal trials. This decision represents a shift in the legislature's allegiance, favoring the challenger's stance and initiating the process to remove the incumbent. Supporting the opposition may occur when the legislature perceives the incumbent as excessively defiant, ideologically distant, or a hindrance to its own policy goals.

3.5 Parameters and Utility Functions

In game-theoretic models, utility functions and parameters serve as the foundation for understanding each player's motivations, preferences, and decision-making processes. Utility functions represent the payoff or satisfaction that each player derives from different outcomes; and parameters quantify the specific costs, benefits, and

distances that influence these payoffs. In this pre-interruption model, these values capture the strategic trade-offs faced by the players as they navigate the potential presidential interruption.

3.5.1 Parameters

- $V > 0$: The value for both the incumbent and opposition derive from holding the executive office. For the incumbent, it captures the benefits of staying in power; for the opposition, V symbolizes the potential value they might gain by replacing the incumbent, either by one of their own or by someone more aligned to their ideals.
- $\gamma \geq 0$: Gamma represents the ideological or policy-related cost incurred by the incumbent when they choose to appease (A) the legislature. By making concessions or aligning more closely with the legislature's preferences, the president may deviate from their ideal policies, incurring a cost γ that reflects the distance between their preferred agenda and the concessions they must make. A higher γ indicates a more ideologically rigid incumbent who incurs a greater cost from appeasement, while a lower value suggests that the government is more flexible and willing to make compromises.
- $c > 0$: Cost associated with interruption proceedings, which is borne by participants if a challenge is initiated. For the incumbent, the cost c reflects the potential political, financial, and reputational damage incurred during a challenge. For the opposition, c represents the resources required to mount a challenge, such as mobilizing support and engaging in legislative conflict. Both players must consider whether the potential benefits outweigh the risks and costs of trials.
- $k > 0$: Captures the utility the legislature gains when the government's policies are closer to their own ideological stance. When the incumbent chooses to appease (A) — meaning that the president adopts policies or positions that are closer to the legislature's preferences —, the legislature gains a benefit (k), allowing them to achieve their policy goals more easily.
- $\theta \geq 0$: Theta is the ideological gap between the incumbent's policy preferences and the legislature's preferences. A larger θ indicates a greater ideological

misalignment, which can strain the relationship between the executive and the Congress, increasing the likelihood of conflict. When θ is high, the legislature may be less willing to support the president. Smaller θ suggests closer alignment, reducing the chances of the legislature supporting the opposition.

- $\delta \geq 0$: Delta represents the ideological distance between the opposition and the legislature. While larger δ implies that the opposition is ideologically distant from the legislature, reducing the likelihood of legislative support for a challenge, smaller δ indicates that the opposition's policies are closer to the legislature's preferences, making the legislature more inclined to support the opposition's strategies.

3.5.2 Incumbent's Utility (U_I)

The utility function for the incumbent U_I reflects their payoff in different scenarios, depending on their choice to appease (A) or defy (D), and the subsequent decisions made by the opposition and legislature. The utility functions capture the incumbent's potential gains and losses from holding office, making concessions, and surviving or failing when challenged.

3.5.2.1 Appease (A)

When the incumbent chooses (A), they incur a cost γ due to policy concessions, which brings them closer to the legislature's preferences. This choice has three possible outcomes, depending on whether the opposition challenges and whether the legislature supports the incumbent.

- **No challenge.** If the opposition chooses not to challenge the incumbent, the incumbent's utility is given by:

$$U_I = V - \gamma \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

Here, the incumbent retains the benefits of office (V) but incurs the cost γ for appeasing the legislature. This scenario represents a stable outcome where the president remains in power without opposition interference, having successfully reduced the ideological distance with the legislature.

- **Challenge and survive.** If the opposition challenges but the incumbent survives — because the legislature supports them —, the incumbent's utility is:

$$U_I = V - \gamma - c \quad \text{Equation 2}$$

In this case, the incumbent still holds office (retains V) but incurs both the appeasement cost γ and the cost of interruption proceedings (c). Although the president is still the Chief Executive, the challenge adds additional costs, representing the political and reputational damage from the conflict. This outcome is suboptimal compared to no challenge but is preferable to being removed.

- **Interruption.** If the opposition challenges and the legislature supports the opposition, the incumbent is removed, resulting in:

$$U_I = 0 \quad \text{Equation 3}$$

The utility is zero because the incumbent loses their position, forfeiting the benefits of office (V). This outcome represents a failure for the government, as the president is removed from power.

3.5.2.2 Defy (D)

When the incumbent chooses (D), they prioritize their own policy preferences without making concessions to the legislature. This strategy reflects a stronger ideological commitment but carries the risk of provoking the opposition and legislature. As with appeasement, defying can result in three possible outcomes, depending on whether the opposition challenges and whether the legislature supports the incumbent.

- **No challenge.** If the opposition decides not to challenge after the incumbent defies, the incumbent's utility is:

$$U_I = V \quad \text{Equation 4}$$

In this scenario, the incumbent retains the full benefit of office (V) without incurring any costs from appeasement or interruption. This is the best outcome for an

incumbent who chooses to defy, as they successfully avoid both concessions and conflict, maintaining full control over their policy agenda.

- **Challenge and survive.** If the opposition challenges but the incumbent survives thanks to the legislative shield, the incumbent's utility is:

$$U_I = V - c \quad \text{Equation 5}$$

The government remains in power (keeps V), but suffers the cost of interruption proceedings (c). Although the incumbent does not make policy concessions, they still suffer some costs. This outcome is riskier than appeasement, as it heightens the potential for conflict and requires — sometimes shaky — support from the legislature to succeed.

- **Interruption.** If the opposition challenges and the legislature supports the opposition, the government falls, resulting in:

$$U_I = 0 \quad \text{Equation 6}$$

As with appeasement, removal leaves the incumbent with zero utility, as they lose the benefits of holding office (V). Defying and being removed is, by far, the worst-case scenario for a president. Not only has the Chief Executive lost after engaging in a stressful and costly battle, but they may also have provoked the ire of the victorious opposition, who might pursue retribution against the former president for daring to defy.

3.5.3 Opposition's Utility (U_O)

The utility function for the opposition U_O captures the costs and benefits of challenging or not the government in order to advance policies closer to its ideological stance. However, the opposition must consider the ideological distance between themselves and the legislature, as well as the costs associated with mounting a challenge.

3.5.3.1 Not challenge (NC)

Opting to acquiesce means avoiding the costs of interruption proceedings, but also not pushing its agenda forward. In this scenario, the opposition's utility is:

$$U_O = -\delta$$

Equation 7

If compliant, the opposition will suffer due to its relative distance from the legislature as a whole. The further it is from the rest of Congress, the more difficult it will be to see policies aligned with its preferences come to fruition. The negative sign indicates that the magnitude of an ideological misalignment imposes costs by itself, for the opposition must contend with policies away from their winsets.

3.5.3.2 Challenge (C)

Challenging demands a cost (c), representing the resources and political capital expended to initiate interruption proceedings. The outcome of a challenge depends on whether the legislature supports the incumbent or the opposition, leading to two potential utility outcomes.

- **Legislature supports incumbent S_I .** If the legislature sides with the incumbent, the opposition's challenge fails, resulting in a utility of:

$$U_O = -\delta - c$$

Equation 8

In this case, the opposition incurs both the relative ideological cost $-\delta$ and the cost (c) associated with the challenge itself. This outcome is the worst-case scenario for the opposition, as they expend resources in an unsuccessful attempt to unseat the president while still remaining ideologically distant from the government and the legislature, depending on the value of $-\delta$.

- **Legislature supports challengers (S_C).** If the legislature supports the opposition, the challenge succeeds, and the opposition gains control of the executive, resulting in a utility of:

$$U_O = V - c$$

Equation 9

The challengers receives the value (V) of holding office or having a more ideologically aligned player do so. However, while this is the best possible outcome for the opposition, you can't have your cake and eat it, for they still incur the cost (c) from the challenge proceedings.

3.5.4 Legislature's Utility (U_L)

The utility function for the legislature (U_L) reflects its interest in aligning with policies that match their average ideological preferences. Thus, the legislature's utility depends on the incumbent's actions and the outcome of any challenge initiated by the opposition. The legislature must weigh the benefits of policy alignment against the costs of supporting a challenge or maintaining the government in power. Hence, the utility outcomes are structured around whether there is a challenge and, if so, whether they support the incumbent or the opposition.

3.5.4.1 Opposition does not challenge

Without aggression stemming from the opposition, the legislature's utility depends solely on the incumbent's decision to appease (A) or defy (D), as this brings the level of policy alignment with the legislature into focus.

- **Incumbent appeases (A).** When the incumbent chooses to appease, the legislature enjoys a utility benefit from policy alignment derived from a government who is willing to compromise:

$$\begin{aligned} U_1 &= -0 + k \\ &= k \end{aligned} \quad \text{Equation 10}$$

In this scenario, the legislature experiences no ideological cost (-0), as the incumbent's policies, after appeasing, are now closer to their preferences. The parameter (k) represents the benefit of this new arrangement.

- **Incumbent defies (D).** If the incumbent chooses to defy and push its agenda, the legislature incurs an ideological cost $-\theta$, reflecting the ideological distance between the legislature and the aggressive incumbent's policies:

$$U_L = -\theta \quad \text{Equation 11}$$

This outcome is less favorable for the legislature, as it would prefer a tamed executive. The larger the value of θ , the greater the legislature's dissatisfaction with the incumbent's agenda and, thus, their defiance.

3.5.4.2 Opposition challenges and legislature supports incumbent

In this scenario, the legislature's utility depends on whether the incumbent had previously chosen (*A*) or (*D*). Supporting the incumbent incurs a cost (*c*), representing the legislature's involvement in defending the government against the opposition.

- **Incumbent appeases (*A*)**. If the president has chosen to appease, the legislature enjoys some policy alignment but still bears the cost of supporting the incumbent:

$$\begin{aligned} U_L &= -0 - c + k \\ &= -c + k \\ &= k - c \end{aligned} \quad \text{Equation 12}$$

Here, the legislature receives the alignment benefit (*k*), but it is reduced by the cost (*c*) of intervening in the interruption proceedings. This outcome is moderately favorable for the legislature, as they achieve policy alignment despite the cost of supporting the incumbent.

- **Incumbent defies (*D*)**. If the incumbent has chosen to defy, the legislature incurs both the ideological cost $-\theta$ from relative policy misalignment with the government and the cost (*c*) of supporting the incumbent in the face of a challenge:

$$U_L = -\theta - c \quad \text{Equation 13}$$

This is not an ideal outcome for the legislature, as they bear the dual burdens of relative policy misalignment and the cost of intervention. The legislature may reluctantly support the incumbent to avoid empowering the opposition, but this choice is suboptimal compared to alignment.

3.5.4.3 Opposition challenges and legislature supports challengers

Here, the legislature's utility is affected by the ideological distance from the opposition $-\theta$ and the cost (*c*) of endorsing the kerfuffle. However, they receive the alignment benefit (*k*) from the policy shift that occurs if the president is interrupted:

$$U_L = -\delta - c + k \quad \text{Equation 14}$$

The legislature's utility depends on the balance between the ideological distance δ , the cost (c) of the challenge, and the alignment benefit (k). If the opposition's policy positions are closer to the legislature's preferences than the government's, this outcome may be preferable to supporting the incumbent. However, if δ is high — that is, a large ideological distance from the opposition —, the legislature may prefer to shield the president or avoid a challenge altogether.

3.6 Solving the Game

To establish the optimal strategies for each player in the pre-interruption game, we use backward induction, a method that starts from the last move in the sequence and works backward to find the best strategies at each stage. Backward induction is appropriate for sequential games with a fixed order of moves, as it enables each player to anticipate the future decisions of others and adjust their own choices accordingly. By analyzing the game in reverse, we identify the equilibrium path, where each player chooses strategies that maximize their utility given the decisions of others.

3.6.1 Backward induction, stage 3: Legislature's decision

In the final stage of the game, the legislature (L) must decide whether to shield the incumbent (I) or side with the opposition (O), *given that the opposition has initiated a challenge*. The legislature's decision is critical, as it determines whether the incumbent remains in power or suffers interruption.

The legislature will choose the option that maximizes its own utility (U_L), considering the ideological distances between itself and the government (θ) and itself and the opposition (δ), as well as the costs (c) and benefits (k) of future policy alignments with the winning side: $U_L(S_I, A)$ or $U_L(S_I, D)$ for the incumbent if they appease or defy, respectively; and $U_L(S_C)$ for the opposition (challengers). These utilities are based on the legislature's payoff structure, as shown by these past equations:

- *Equation 12* (O challenges, L shields I after appeasement): $U_L(S_I, A) = k - c$.
- *Equation 13* (O challenges, L shields I after defiance): $U_L(S_I, D) = -\theta - c$
- *Equation 14* (O challenges, L backs challengers): $U_L(S_C) = -\delta - c + k$

To determine who the legislature will support, we compare the utilities for each option. The legislature will back the one that maximizes its utility, resulting in the following decision rule:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\text{Support Opposition if} \\
 &U_L(S_C) \geq U_L(S_I) \\
 &\Rightarrow -\delta - c + k \geq -\theta - c + k \quad \text{Equation 15} \\
 &\Rightarrow -\delta \geq -\theta \\
 &\Rightarrow \delta \leq \theta
 \end{aligned}$$

The legislature will support the opposition if the ideological distance between them (δ) is less than or equal to the ideological distance between the legislature and the incumbent (θ). If $\delta \leq \theta$, the legislature perceives the opposition as ideologically closer and thus prefers to support the challenge, as it sees a greater policy benefit from a change in executive leadership.

Conversely, if $\delta > \theta$, the legislature sees the incumbent as closer in terms of ideological alignment, leading it to support the government and reject the opposition's defiance. In this case, the legislature calculates that shielding the president offers greater benefits than supporting an ideologically distant opposition.

3.6.2 Backward induction, stage 2: Opposition's decision

In the second stage of the game, the opposition (O) decides whether to challenge the Incumbent (I) based on their expected utilities. This decision establishes whether the game will proceed to the legislature's decision or end with the president retaining their position unchallenged. The opposition's choice depends on its ideological alignment with the legislature, the value it places on holding office, and the costs associated with initiating an interruption. The opposition will pursue the option that maximizes its utility:

- Equation 7 (O does not challenge): $U_O = -\delta$
- Equation 8 (O challenges, L shields I): $U_O(C, S_I) = -\delta - c$
- Equation 9 (O challenges, L backs O): $U_O(C, S_C) = V - c$

3.6.2.1 Case 1: Opposition is backed by legislature

If the legislature is expected to support the challengers, the ideological distance between them (δ) is, expectedly, less than or equal to the ideological distance between the incumbent and the legislature (θ). In this case, the opposition will compare the utility from challenging — with anticipated legislature support — to the utility from not challenging.

Utility Comparison

$$U_o(C, S_C) \geq U_o(NC)$$

$$\Rightarrow V - c \geq -\delta$$

$$\Rightarrow V \geq -\delta + c$$

Equation 16

Since $V > 0$ and $c > 0$, and $-\delta + c$ is typically negative or small, this condition usually holds. In other words, the value of gaining office generally outweighs the combined ideological distance and challenge cost, making it advantageous for the opposition to challenge.

3.6.2.2 Case 2: Legislature shields incumbent

But, in the case where the legislature supports the president, the ideological distance between the legislature and the opposition (δ) is greater than the distance between the legislature and the government (θ). Contrary to the previous case, here, the opposition expects a tough battle, comparing its utility from challenging versus not challenging.

Utility Comparison

$$U_o(C, S_I) \geq U_o(NC)$$

$$\Rightarrow -\delta - c \geq -\delta$$

$$\Rightarrow -c \geq 0$$

Equation 17

Since $c > 0$, this inequality does not hold. The cost of a challenge exceeds any benefits in this scenario, meaning the opposition would not gain from initiating an interruption, thus acquiescing.

3.6.3 Backward induction, stage 1: Incumbent's decision

In the first stage of the game, the incumbent (I) decides whether to appease (A) or defy (D). This decision depends on the anticipated responses from the opposition (O) and the legislature (L), which affect the incumbent's utility in each possible scenario. The president seeks to maximize their utility by choosing the option that minimizes the risk of interruption and maximizes the benefits of holding office.

If the incumbent chooses to appease, they incur a policy cost γ to align more closely with the legislature. This action has three potential outcomes, depending on whether the opposition decides to challenge and who the legislature supports.

- *Equation 1* (O does not challenge): $U_I(A) = V - \gamma$
- *Equation 2* (O challenges, L shields I): $U_I(A) = V - \gamma - c$
- *Equation 3* (O challenges, L supports O): $U_I(A) = 0$

The incumbent's utility, therefore, depends on whether the opposition finds it worthwhile to challenge. The optimal outcome for the president occurs if the opposition does not challenge (*Equation 1*).

However, by choosing to defy, the president prioritize their policy preferences over concessions, which can increase the ideological distance in relation to the legislature. This choice also has three potential outcomes based on how the other players react.

- *Equation 4* (O does not challenge): $U_I(D) = V$
- *Equation 5* (O challenges, L shields I): $U_I(D) = V - c$
- *Equation 6* (O challenges, L supports O): $U_I(D) = 0$

Defying allows the incumbent to pursue their preferred policies and retain the full benefit of office (*Equation 4*) if the opposition does not challenge. This is risky however, since the opposition can choose to retaliate and be backed by the legislature, leading to removal.

In sum:

- The incumbent will choose to appease (A) if a challenge is likely and appeasement costs are manageable ($V - \gamma > 0$).

- The incumbent will choose to defy (D) if the legislature's alignment suggests a low likelihood of challenge ($\delta > \theta$).

3.7 *Equilibrium analysis*

The equilibrium analysis identifies three possible stable outcomes in the game, depending on the ideological alignment between the players and the costs faced by the incumbent. Each equilibrium describes a set of strategies where no player has an incentive to deviate, given the strategies of others.

3.7.1 *Equilibrium 1: Incumbent defies and survives*

In the first equilibrium, the incumbent chooses to defy and successfully remains in power. This scenario arises when the legislature is ideologically closer to the president than to the opposition ($\delta < \theta$), and thus has little motivation to support a challenge. At the same time, a high appeasement cost γ discourages the incumbent from aligning their policies with the legislature. Under these conditions, the opposition recognizes that a challenge would be futile, as the legislature's support for the government makes the interruption unlikely to succeed. Consequently, the opposition refrains from challenging, leaving the incumbent free to pursue their preferred policies without making concessions.

3.7.2 *Equilibrium 2: Incumbent appeases to avoid removal*

This equilibrium describes a situation where the incumbent decides to appease in order to avoid being interrupted. Here, the legislature is ideologically aligned more closely with the opposition ($\delta \leq \theta$), and would likely back a challenge if one were initiated. However, the cost of appeasement γ is low, specifically less than the value of holding office, V . In this case, the president recognizes that making policy concessions to align with the legislature is the more strategic choice, as it reduces the risk of opposition-led attacks.

By appeasing, the government incurs a manageable cost γ , maintaining office stability while discouraging the opposition from launching a challenge that would likely receive legislative support. This equilibrium, therefore, captures a pragmatic choice by the president to prioritize their political survival over ideological preferences.

3.7.3 *Equilibrium 3: Incumbent defies and is interrupted*

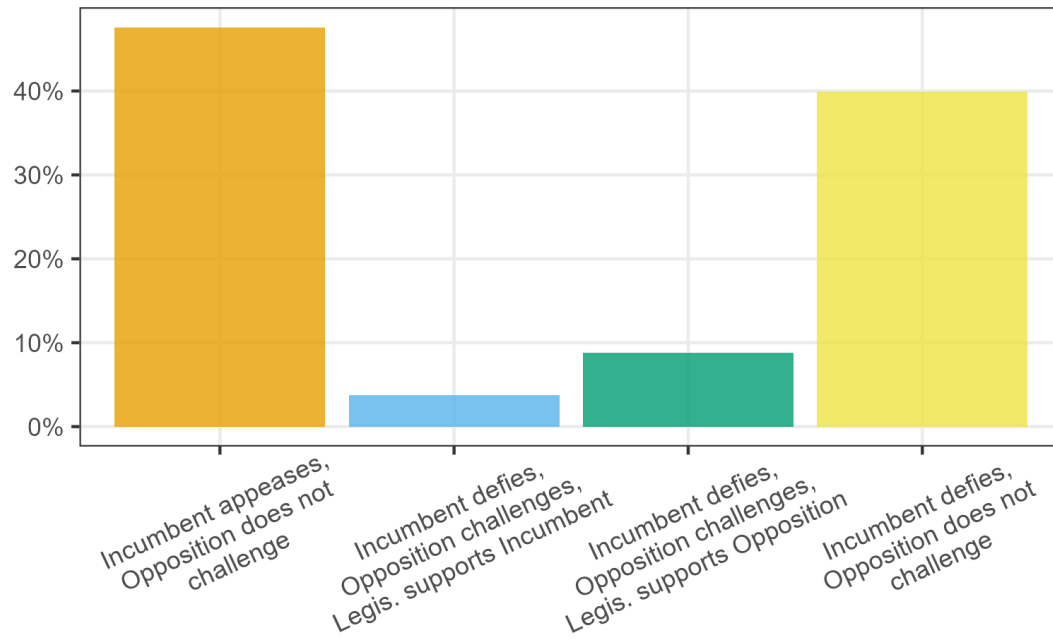
Finally, in this equilibrium the incumbent opts to defy, but this choice leads to their removal. In this bleak scenario for the president, the legislature, again, favors the opposition ($\delta \leq \theta$), making it likely to support a challenge if one is initiated. The incumbent's cost of appeasement is prohibitively high, however ($\gamma \geq V$), leading the incumbent to reject policy concessions and prioritize their ideological stance even if it means risking the office. Recognizing the legislature's support for the removal, the opposition sees a challenge as viable and initiates interruption proceedings. Isolated and unable to maintain its position, the government

3.8 *Simulations*

In order to explore the strategic interactions outlined in the game-theoretic model, a series of simulations were conducted to assess potential outcomes under diverse ideological alignments and policy decisions. These simulations aim to fulfill two key objectives: 1) to validate the theoretical predictions of the model's equilibria; and 2) to examine the model's behavior across varied political conditions by adjusting critical parameters.

Each simulation strictly follows the rules laid out in this chapter and was run on 10,000 randomly generated games based on the parameters outlined in section 3.5.1. They follow a sequence where the incumbent acts first, followed by the opposition, and then the legislature, each responding to the previous moves. For each parameter set, the simulation tracks whether the incumbent appeases, defies, or faces a challenge from the opposition, also recording the outcome of the game, which can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Distribution of outcomes



Author's elaboration.

After a quick glance at the distribution, it is possible to cautiously argue that the game-theoretic model mimics, in part, real-world political dynamics, particularly in contexts where incumbents face the constant challenge of balancing appeasement and defiance to maintain stability. The two most frequent outcomes, “incumbent appeases, opposition does not challenge” (*Equation 1*) and “incumbent defies, opposition does not challenge” (*Equation 4*), suggest that, incumbents can maintain their positions either by making concessions to align with legislative interests or by standing firm as the opposition accept its place without provoking. These optimal pathways reflects a pragmatic reality for many political leaders: they must constantly assess the political climate and decide whether compromise or resilience is more likely to secure their hold on power.

On the one hand, when the ideological cost of appeasement is manageable (low γ), presidents may find it preferable to build coalitions and align with legislative preferences to avoid a challenge. On the other hand, when the government’s agenda strongly resonates with the legislature, or when the ideological distance θ is minimal, defiance may not trigger an opposition response, allowing the incumbent to pursue their policies unchallenged.

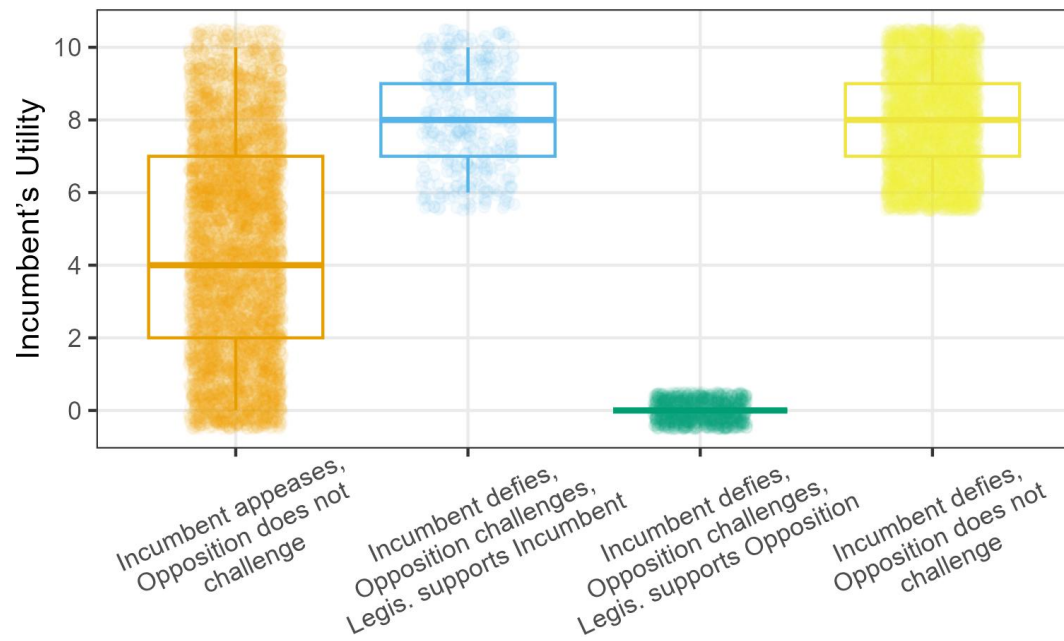
The less frequent outcomes, “incumbent defies, opposition challenges, legislature supports incumbent” (*Equation 5*), and “incumbent defies, opposition challenges, legislature supports opposition” (*Equation 6*) represent higher-stakes scenarios where the opposition decides to confront the incumbent, leading to a potential interruption.

In the simulations, 876 out of 9124 games concluded with the president being removed, an interruption rate of 8.76%. For comparison, from 1980 to 2023, there have been 180 presidencies in the Latin American countries analyzed in Chapter 5, 21 of which ended in interruption, or 11.66% — not too shabby. This similarity suggests that the model effectively captures the strategic conditions likely to precipitate an interruption. Additionally, the difference might reflect the model’s focus on ideological and strategic factors over unpredictable human behaviors and external shocks.

Alternatively, if we compare on an administration-year basis, 20 interruptions out of 792 administration-years give a rate of 2.53%. This lower rate aligns with the idea that, while interruptions are significant events, they are relatively rare on a yearly basis, occurring only under specific high-stakes conditions that the model correctly identifies.

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the incumbent's utility across different simulation outcomes. The highest utility outcomes for the president occur in scenarios where they avoid a challenge, either through appeasement or defiance that does not escalate. Conversely, the lowest utility is seen when the incumbent defies, and the opposition challenges with legislative support, resulting in removal.

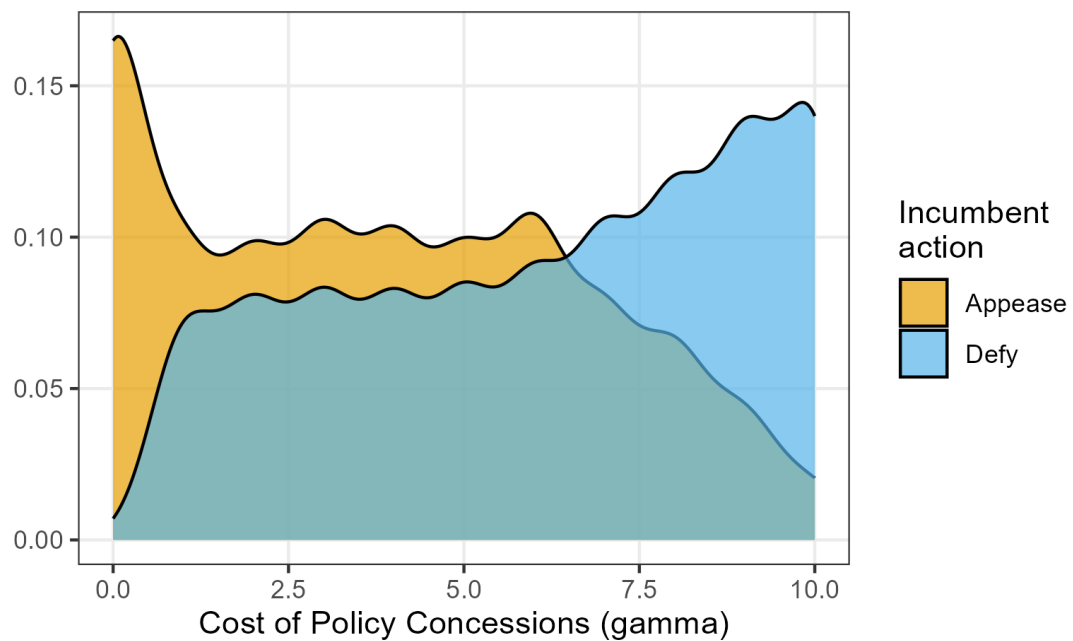
Figure 2 – Incumbent's utility across outcomes



Author's elaboration.

As for Figure 3, it shows the relationship between the cost of policy concessions γ and the incumbent's strategic decision to either appease or defy.

Figure 3 – Cost of policy concessions and incumbent action



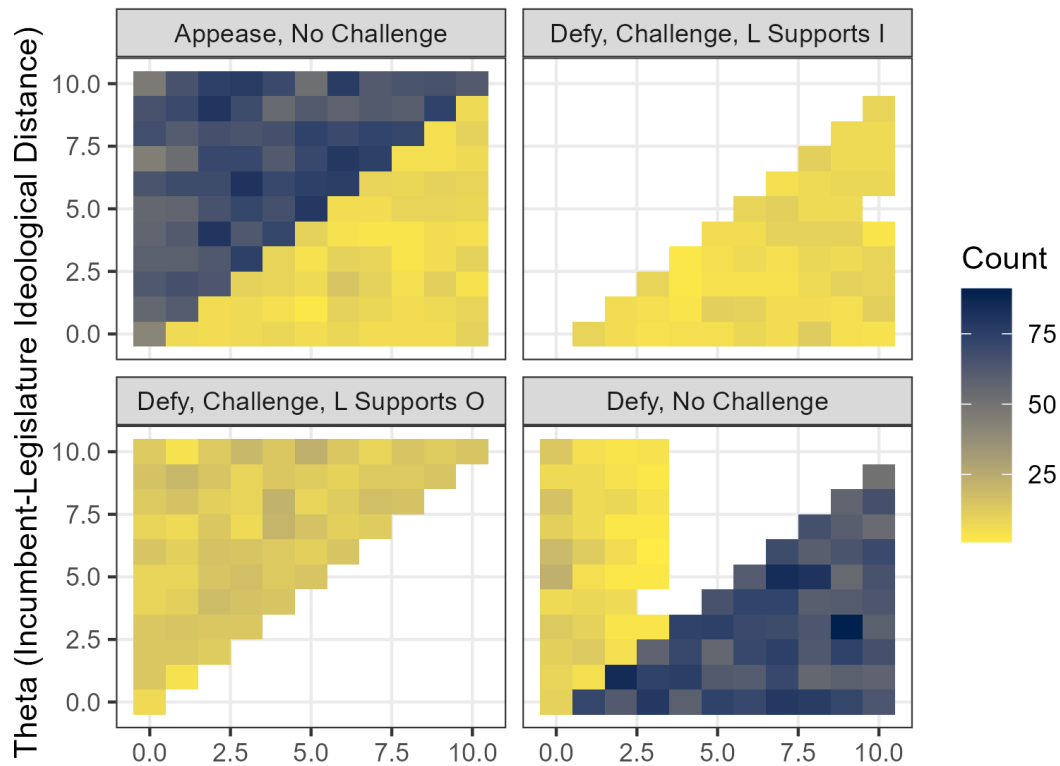
Author's elaboration.

At the lower values of γ , where the cost of appeasing the legislature is relatively small, the government more frequently chooses to make concessions, as the benefit of stability outweighs minor ideological sacrifices. As γ grows, however, appeasement becomes costly for the incumbent, who will prioritize their policy objectives over the potential stabilizing effects of appeasement, leading them to choose defiance more consistently.

The heatmap presented in Figure 4 illustrates how the ideological distances between the incumbent and legislature θ and between the opposition and legislature δ are distributed in each outcome. The same conclusions can be derived from Table 2.

For “appease, no challenge”, the outcome predominantly occurs when $\theta > \delta$ — that is, the incumbent finds it strategic to appease when it perceives a high ideological distance with the legislature, making defiance riskier. In “defy, challenge, legislature supports incumbent”, we see a concentration in areas where δ is greater than θ , indicating that the legislature supports a defying incumbent when it’s away from the opposition.

Figure 4 – Heatmap likelihood of each outcome by θ and δ



Author's elaboration.

Table 2 – Summary of ideological distances per outcome

Outcome	Mean		Median	
	θ	δ	θ	δ
I_A, O_{NC}	6.41	3.75	7	3
I_D, O_C, L_I	3.14	7.20	3	8
I_D, O_C, L_O	6.78	3.47	7	3
I_D, O_{NC}	3.09	6.48	3	7

Author's elaboration.

In “defy, challenge, legislature supports opposition”, the distribution is skewed towards cases where $\theta > \delta$, suggesting that the legislature backs the opposition when it is ideologically closer to them than the incumbent is. Lastly, “defy, no challenge” primarily when $\delta > \theta$, although some cases appear with $\theta > \delta$. This might indicate that moderate ideological differences can lead to a stable defiance by the incumbent without provoking a challenge. Wrapping up the simulation analysis, Table 3 and Figure 5 expose the factors influencing the odds of presidential interruption in the simulated games.

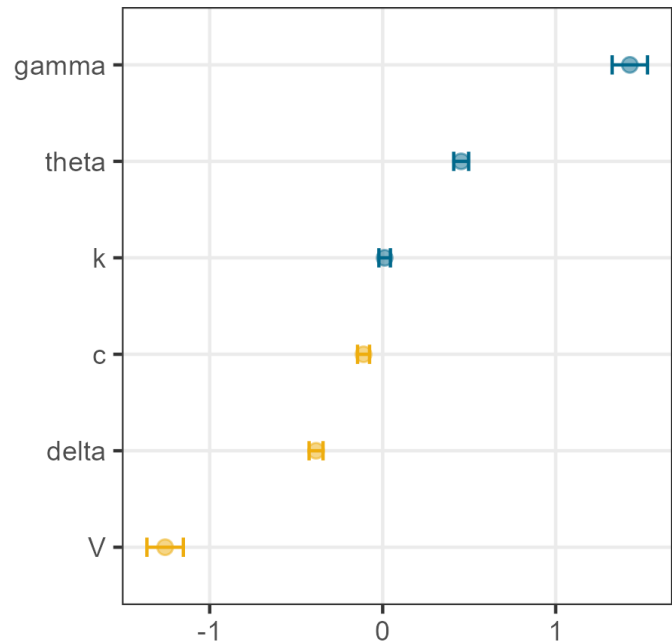
Table 3 – Logistic regression game interruptions

	Simulation
Intercept	-98.97 *** (0.45)
θ	57.42 *** (0.02)
δ	-31.96 *** (0.02)
γ	317.30 *** (0.05)
V	-71.57 *** (0.05)
c	-10.47 *** (0.02)
k	1.14 (0.02)
Num. obs.	10000

Author's elaboration. Estimates are presented as percentage changes in the odds of interruption. Standard errors are in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Figure 5 – Logistic regression game interruptions



Author's elaboration. Estimates are presented as log-odds. 95% confidence interval.

Starting with the parameters responsible for increasing the odds of interruptions, a one-unit increase in the ideological distance between the incumbent and the legislature (θ) increases the odds of interruption by 57.42%. More importantly, each increase in the cost of policy concessions to the incumbent (γ) raises the odds of interruption by a whopping 317.30%. In other words, in the simulated game, incumbents facing high costs from policy compromises are way more likely to experience interruptions.

Focusing on the parameters that diminish the odds of removals, a one-unit increase in the ideological distance between the opposition and the legislature (δ), in the value of holding office (V), and in the costs of interruption proceedings (c), decreases the odds of removals by, respectively, 31.96%, 71.57% and 10.47%. The benefit the legislature gains from policy alignment with the incumbent (k) shows no impact.

These results highlight, for the simulated game, the central role of ideological alignment in determining interruption likelihood. High ideological distance between the incumbent and the legislature and between the opposition and the legislature significantly influence interruption odds, as expected in contexts where legislative support is essential for political stability.

More substantially, the effect of policy concession costs on the likelihood of removal indicates that a president who adopts a rigid stance by refusing to make concessions or build coalitions risks considerable vulnerability and isolation. Especially in Latin America, where minority governments and coalition-building are often the norm, an unwillingness to cooperate can leave a president without the legislative shield necessary to govern effectively or protect themselves. This lack of flexibility can lead to a loss of influence and, consequently, pivotal allies. Furthermore, when presidents attempt to govern alone, bypassing coalitions or refusing compromise, they may resort to executive decrees or other unilateral powers, which can escalate tensions and foster a perception of authoritarianism.

3.9 Hypothesis

According to Alemán and Tsebelis (2016), political elites aim to maximize agenda control and policy influence, adapting their strategies to institutional constraints and

emerging opportunities. Agenda setters' capacity to leverage institutional power is significantly shaped by their ideological alignment with other key players, particularly the legislature. When the executive and legislative align, policy advancement is more efficient, as it reduces the conflicts and negotiation costs typically associated with policymaking.

In the wake of a presidential interruption, however, the political landscape shifts, requiring elites to reassess and adjust strategies based on new power distributions and their revised positions within the policy space. Post-interruption, the new government, aware of the instability that led to its predecessor's fall, strives to consolidate agenda control more effectively — and cautiously, as it recognizes that ideological proximity to the legislature will facilitate smoother policy implementation and help avoid repeating the mistakes that led to the downfall of their predecessor.

For legislative actors, the priority is advancing preferred policies while maintaining stability to prevent further disruptions, as nobody likes a messy house. They recognize that supporting a stable, ideologically closer government may serve their goals, leading the legislature to influence the new administration toward policies within an acceptable ideological range.

This mutual understanding fosters a form of post-interruption political synergy: the new government aligns more closely with legislative preferences to secure its position, while the legislature provides essential support for effective governance. For the incumbent, ignoring this expectation means risking their own neck. History shows that post-interruption presidents who resist such alignment risk quick removal, potentially triggering a series of interruptions until (some) stability is achieved.

As a result, ideological distances between the new government and legislature are expected to narrow, and government concentration is likely to increase. In this reconfigured environment, a more stable and unified legislative bloc would emerge to support the government's agenda. This alignment not only reduces the likelihood of another interruption, but also enhances policy-making efficiency by decreasing obstacles and expediting the legislative process.

Agenda setters near the ideological center of the policy space can more effectively steer policy outcomes toward their ideal points (Alemán & Tsebelis, 2016). Consequently, the new government may shift toward the center to remain aligned with the Congress, facilitating smoother negotiation and agenda-setting processes with a more cohesive legislative coalition that appeals to the majority of stakeholders. This lead us to the hypothesis.

A presidential interruption catalyzes a reconfiguration of the political landscape, leading to increased government concentration and legislative cohesion.

With a renewed focus on stability and coherent policy advancement, actors across the political spectrum realign their strategies within the new power structure. This repositioning fosters durable coalitions, reduces ideological fragmentation, and streamlines the legislative process, ultimately enhancing stability and recalibrating power relations in the post-interruption environment.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND DESCRIPTIVE MEASURES

This dissertation focuses on the consequences of presidential interruptions for government-opposition interactions: the struggle for power par excellence. This choice is not arbitrary. From the first comparative studies (Serrafero, 1996; Pérez-Liñán, 1998) to the most recent ones (Llanos & Marsteintredet, 2021; Llanos & Pérez-Liñán, 2021), the literature has stressed the pivotal importance of inter-branch dynamics for the ousting of Chief Executives. Therefore, I ask: How do presidential interruptions affect the political landscape in which the government and legislature operate? As stated, it is hypothesized that presidential removals lead to a reconfiguration of the political landscape, increasing government concentration and legislative cohesion.

4.1 *Analytical tools*

In order to assess the consequences of presidential interruptions, this study employs both Multivariate Multiple Regression (MMR) and Bayesian Multivariate Multilevel Models (BMM) to test the hypothesis. This dual-method approach serves two main purposes: addressing potential violations of statistical assumptions inherent in MMR and enhancing the robustness of the findings through cross-validation.

MMR is a classical statistical technique that models the relationships between multiple independent variables and multiple dependent variables simultaneously (Rencher & Christensen, 2012). In the context of this study, where multiple interrelated political outcomes are of interest — such as legislative constraints, ideological distances, and government concentration — MMR is an appropriate starting point.

Alas, preliminary analyses using MMR revealed significant violations of key statistical assumptions across all dependent variables: 1) non-constant variance of residuals across levels of the independent variables (heteroscedasticity), which can lead to inefficient estimates and biased standard errors, undermining the validity of hypothesis tests (Long & Ervin, 2000); and 2) the residuals deviated from a normal distribution, affecting the reliability of confidence intervals and p-values, potentially leading to incorrect conclusions about statistical significance. While transformations of variables and the use

of robust standard errors were considered, they did not fully rectify the assumption violations.

Given these limitations, BMM offers a flexible and robust alternative that effectively addresses these challenges. The tool can specify heteroscedastic error structures and accommodate varying variances within the data (Carlin & Louis, 2009). It also allows for alternative distributions of residuals, which are more robust to outliers and heavy tails (Gelman et al., 2013). Moreover, it enables the inclusion of prior distributions, allowing the integration of theoretical knowledge and preventing overfitting through the use of weakly informative priors (Gelman et al., 2008).

For MMRs, fixed effects for countries were included to control for unobserved heterogeneity at the country level. This approach treats country-specific effects as constant but allows for intercept differences between countries. For BMMs, random intercepts for countries were incorporated to capture country-level variations more flexibly within a hierarchical framework. Weakly informative priors were set for all parameters to let the data inform the estimates while preventing overfitting.

For models in the first analytical block, which examine continuous dependent variables like legislative constraints and ideological distances, MMR and BMM were directly compared. However, for the second analytical block, focused on binary dependent variables, only BMM was used, due to the inappropriateness of MMR for handling categorical or binary outcomes. Additionally, since the BMM results from the first block were consistent with MMR outputs, this provided confidence in using only BMM for the second part. The same logic applies to the third block, which compares observed interruptions with synthetic analogs, where BMM was the sole method employed to streamline the analysis.

Consistent results between MMR and BMM in overlapping analyses further validate the reliability of conclusions (Jackman, 2009), while the selective use of BMM for binary outcomes avoids methodological mismatches and focuses on precision. In cases where results might diverge, this dual approach also facilitates sensitivity analyses to assess how outcomes vary under different modeling assumptions (McElreath, 2020).

The analysis is structured into three similar blocks, each designed to assess the reverberations of presidential interruptions on distinct facets of the legislative arena and comparing it to changes in government via regular elections. The first block focuses on the granular ramifications of interruptions on: the legislature's capacity to question, investigate, and oversee the executive; how much the executive's survival depends on the confidence of the legislature; the alignment of policy preferences between the executive and the broader legislative system; the level of concentration of the government; and the level of concentration of the opposition.

The second block leans over the broader indicators of political cohesion and systemic stability: the degree of ideological polarization between the executive and major legislative parties; how much the same party or coalition controls both the executive and the legislature, as opposed to a divided government.

You might have noticed that some of these variables overlap in their conceptual focus, capturing closely related dimensions of executive *de facto* power and ideological alignment. This redundancy is deliberate and serves a critical methodological purpose: by measuring similar constructs through different means, we gain a more robust and rich understanding of the phenomenon. This approach allows us to cross-validate findings, assess consistency across indicators, and identify distinctions that might be overlooked if relying on a single measure.

For instance, “ideological distance between the government and the legislature” and “polarization” both aim to capture the degree of alignment or divergence in political stances. However, they do so with different emphases. Ideological distance measures alignment on a continuous scale, providing granularity in how closely the executive’s and legislature’s policy preferences align. Polarization, on the other hand, operates as a binary derived from a categorical indicator, focusing on whether significant ideological divides exist. By examining both, we can test whether granular shifts in ideological distance correspond to broader trends in polarization and vice versa.

Similarly, government concentration, as measured by the Herfindahl Index, and control unification, which reflects whether a single party or coalition controls both the executive and legislature, overlap conceptually in assessing political cohesion and

coalition dynamics for the government. However, they address this concept from different angles. The Herfindahl Index provides a continuous measure of fragmentation within the incumbent's coalition, capturing variations in its dominance. In contrast, control unification simplifies this into a binary outcome, reflecting whether the government operates under unified or divided control. By comparing these variables, we can explore whether shifts in fragmentation levels necessarily translate into unified control, or if intermediate states of fragmentation hold unique implications for governance.

To wrap things up, the third block repeats the models from the first two blocks, but adds another comparative dimension, examining how political dynamics differ between presidential interruptions and regular transitions of power through elections. By creating synthetic, analogous pre-election-non-interrupted terms through Coarsened Exact Matching, this block allows for an evaluation of whether the observed aftershocks of interruptions — such as shifts in legislative oversight, changes in government-opposition alignment, and variations in coalition dynamics — are also shared by routine electoral cycles.

The comparisons between observed presidential interruptions and synthetic ones are *not* designed as a quasi-experiment to establish causal treatment effects or credible counterfactual scenarios for what might have happened in the absence of an interruption. Presidential falls are not arbitrary interventions in governance but deliberate and profound political phenomena that, by their very nature, alter the political landscape.

Unlike random shocks or treatments in a quasi-experimental framework, interruptions inherently involve significant disruptions to the regular functioning of the political system. They do not merely adjust a single variable within a political environment — they redefine the rules of the game and radically reshape relationships among political elite, being critical junctures designed to disrupt the status quo. Framing them as treatments requiring quasi-experimental validation is redundant. By definition, presidential interruptions reshape the political order, with profound, *sui generis* impacts, thus requiring no external confirmation. Consequently, it is not a question of “whether interruptions have effects” but rather “how these effects manifest compared to other mechanisms of executive change”. Thus, the purpose of this block is merely for scientific curiosity.

4.2 Data

To test the hypothesis, data from two sources were used: the Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem, Coppedge et al., 2024) and the Database of Political Institutions (DPI, Cruz et al., 2021). In total, 792 administration-years from 18¹² countries were analyzed, from 1980 to 2023, corresponding to 180 unique heads of state — 21 of which interrupted. Table 4 provides a summary of all the variables included in this study, which will then be described in length in the following sections.

Table 4 – Summary of the variables of interest

Variable	Description	Source	Min.	Med.	Mean	SD	Max
Pre-post interruption	Categorical. Divides the terms into three groups: Regular Terms = 78.8% Pre-interruption = 7.7% Post-interruption = 13.5%	Manually coded	-	-	-	-	-
Years post-interruption	Counts from the first year after a presidential removal to the end of the first democratically elected term.	Manually coded	0	0	0.6	1.8	12
Synthetic pre-post interruption	Categorical. Divides the terms into three groups: Regular Terms = 82.9% Pre-interruption = 7.3% Post-interruption = 9.7%	CEM	-	-	-	-	-
Synthetic years post-interruption	Counts from the first year after a synthetic removal to the end of the first democratically elected term.	CEM	0	0	0.4	1.3	10
GDP per capita	Control. Gross domestic product per capita.	V-Dem	1.2	7.9	8.6	4.63	24.9
Years after new legislature	Control. Counts from the first year of a new legislature to the start of the next, at which point it resets.	Derived from V-Dem	1	2	2.79	1.96	17
Constraints	The legislature's capacity to oversee and check the executive.	V-Dem	0.02	0.69	0.58	0.30	0.98

¹² Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Variable	Description	Source	Min.	Med.	Mean	SD	Max
Executive needs legislative confidence	The extent to which the executive's position depends on legislative support.	V-Dem	0	0	0.23	0.32	0.33
Ideological distance gov-system	The ideological distance between the government and the overall legislative system.	Derived from V-Dem	0	0.15	0.18	0.13	0.45
Polarization	Dummy. The maximum ideological polarization between the executive's party and the principal legislative parties.	Derived from DPI	0	0	0.43	0.49	1
Unified Control	Dummy. Whether the executive and legislative branches are controlled by a single party or unified coalition.	Derived from V-Dem	0	1	0.69	0.46	1
Herfindahl Index Gov.	The concentration of party seat shares in the government. I.e. how fragmented or consolidated the government is.	DPI	0.07	1	0.79	0.28	1
Herfindahl Index Opp.	Same as above, but for the opposition.	DPI	0.04	0.48	0.51	0.25	1

Author's elaboration.

4.2.1 Synthetic interruptions

In order to create a comparative framework between actual presidential interruptions and changes in government unrelated to presidential falls, I identified "synthetic terms" that could serve as matched counterparts to the empirical removals based on specific economic and democratic indexes. The first step in this process involves picking key variables to ensure some level of comparability. Next, to select for similar presidential terms, the Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM) approach was chosen. CEM operates by temporarily "coarsening" the covariates through intervals and placing them into discrete groups, treating them as equivalent within their respective "bins" (Iacus, King, & Porro, 2012). Once coarsened, the method seeks exact matches between treated and control units.

By matching on GDP per capita, the analysis controls for economic conditions that might affect political stability. Economic performance is a well-documented factor in regime change and political upheaval (Przeworski et al., 2000). Similarly, the V-Dem indices provide a broad view of the democratic environment, accounting for electoral processes, civil liberties, citizen participation, deliberative quality, and equality (Coppedge et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of CEM in achieving good pairings was assessed through the balance statistics exposed in Table 5. The results indicated that the observed and synthetic groups are well-balanced across all matching variables, with standardized mean differences below commonly accepted thresholds (Stuart, 2010). The matched control units — which are strictly composed of the last year of non-interrupted terms — serve a hypothetical removal, designed to mimic the conditions of an actual presidential falls. The synthetic interruptions were then operationalized identically to their true counterparts.

Table 5 – CEM's balance statistics

Variable	Treated Mean	Control Mean	Std. Mean Diff.	Var. Ratio	eCDF Mean	eCDF Max	Std. Pair Dist.
GDPpc	8.76	8.54	0.08	1.31	0.03	0.5	0.1
Electoral	0.75	0.77	-0.12	1.49	0.03	0.5	0.12
Liberal	0.58	0.59	-0.04	1.35	0.03	0.5	0.1
Participatory	0.54	0.53	0.14	1.61	0.03	0.5	0.14
Deliberative	0.53	0.54	-0.04	0.79	0.02	0.5	0.06
Egalitarian	0.47	0.45	0.1	0.97	0.02	0.5	0.1

*Author's elaboration. **Treated Mean and Control Mean:** the average values of each variable for the interrupted terms and the matched non-interrupted terms, respectively. **Standardized Mean Difference (Std. Mean Diff.):** measures the difference in means between the treated and control groups, standardized by the pooled standard deviation. Values closer to zero indicate better balance between the groups. **Variance Ratio (Var. Ratio):** compares the variance of each variable in the treated group to that in the control group. A value close to 1 suggests similar variances, indicating that the distribution of the variable is similar across groups. **Empirical Cumulative Distribution Function Mean and Max (eCDF Mean, eCDF Max):** assesses the overall and maximum differences in the distributions of each variable between the*

treated and control groups. Lower values indicate better balance. **Standardized Pairwise Distance (Std. Pair Dist.):** aggregate measure of the balance for each variable, with lower values indicating better balance.

Across all variables, the standardized mean differences are below 0.15, which is great. The variance ratios are close to 1, indicating similar variability in the variables between the groups. The eCDF Mean and Max values are low, further confirming that the distributions of the variables are similar between the treated and control groups.

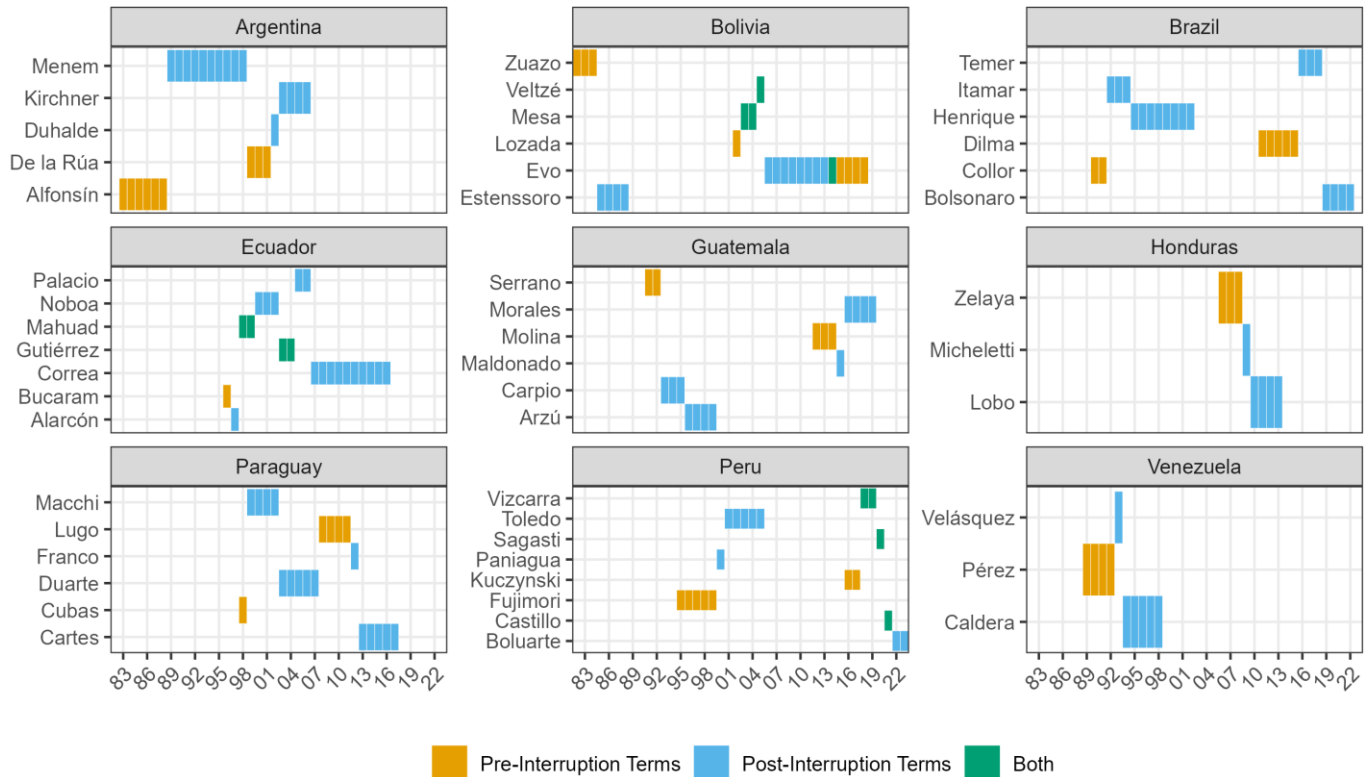
4.3 Independent variables

The main independent variables were manually coded into the data frame, and capture the dynamics of presidential terms relative to interruptions in two different ways, allowing for both categorical and continuous analyses of the timelines of removals.

4.3.1 Pre-post interruption categorization (*pre_post_interruption*)

This categorical variable is divided into three groups: “Regular Terms” (the reference category), “Pre-Interruption Terms,” and “Post-Interruption Terms.”

Figure 6 – Yearly distribution of the categorical operationalization by term



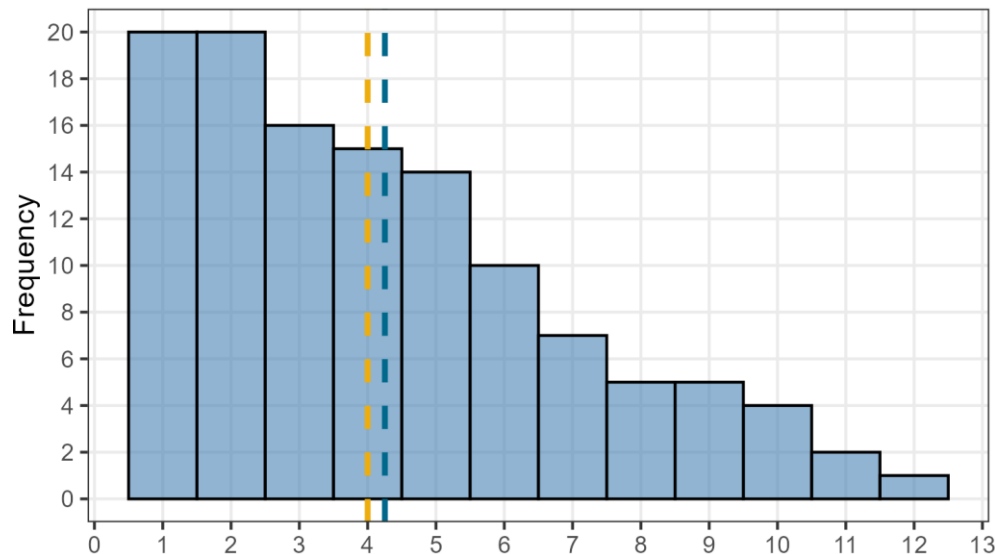
Author's elaboration.

A president's tenure is classified as "Pre-" from their first year in office until their interruption, while successors following a removal are coded as "Post-" until the completion of the first democratically elected term. Notably, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Uruguay had no interruptions during the period analyzed. In cases where a presidency overlaps between "Pre-" and "Post-" categories, such as when a president spans both periods — illustrated by the green blocks in Figure 6 — the default categorization is "Pre-Interruption." For example, Evo Morales (Bolivia) in 2014 is coded as "Pre-Interruption" due to the intersection with the lead-up to his eventual removal.

4.3.2 Years post-interruption (*interruption_t*)

This continuous variable tracks the progression of post-interruption periods, counting from the first year after a presidential removal to the end of the first democratically elected term. The variable resets to 0 after the conclusion of this term, ensuring a clean delineation between interruption-related effects and subsequent regular governance periods. Importantly, the variable also accounts for "chain interruptions", where multiple successive oustings occur before political stabilization. Examples include Argentina from de la Rúa to Kirchner and Peru from Kuczynski to Boluarte.

Figure 7 – Frequency of the continuous post-interruption by years

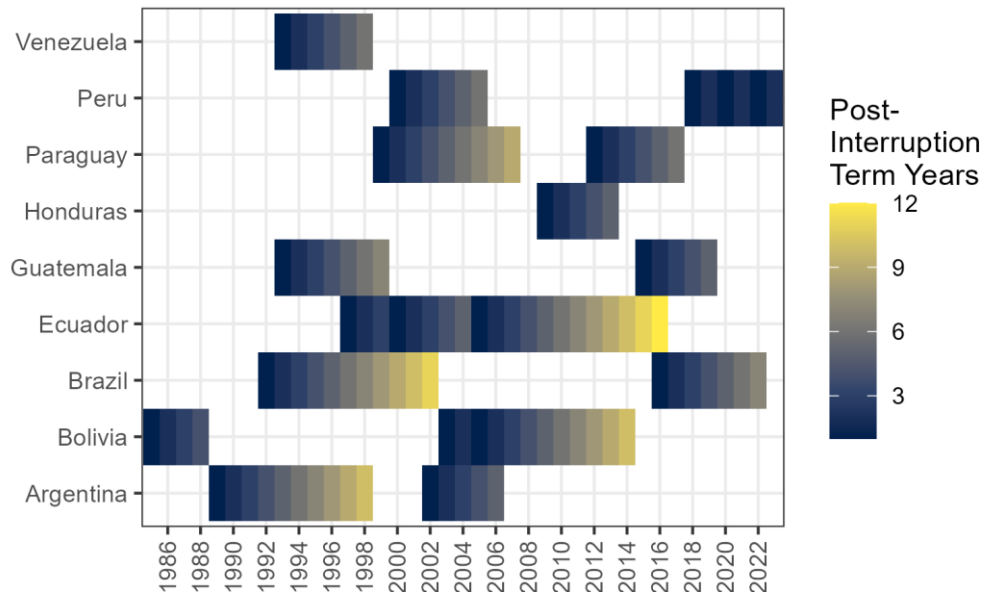


Author's elaboration. Blue dashed line: mean. Yellow dashed line: median.

It is important to note that, in this codification, regular terms and pre-interruption periods are combined into a single temporal construct, making it challenging to disentangle the distinct dynamics of each phase without adding more categorical controls.

Figure 8 presents the frequency of post-interruption years across Latin America from 1980 to 2023. Excluding regular and pre-interruption terms, post-interruption periods average 4.25 years.

Figure 8 – Continuous post-interruption terms by country



Author's elaboration.

Ecuador is the most notable outlier, with a post-interruption period of 12 years spanning the removal of Abdalá Bucaram to the conclusion of Rafael Correa's presidency, as depicted in Figure 8.

4.4 Dependent variables

The dependent variables were selected to capture the critical dimensions of political realignment, government concentration, and ideological shifts that are expected to occur post-interruption. Each one directly reflects key aspects of executive-legislative interactions, agenda-setting power, and ideological positioning, providing measurable indicators of the changes hypothesized in the aftermath of presidential interruptions.

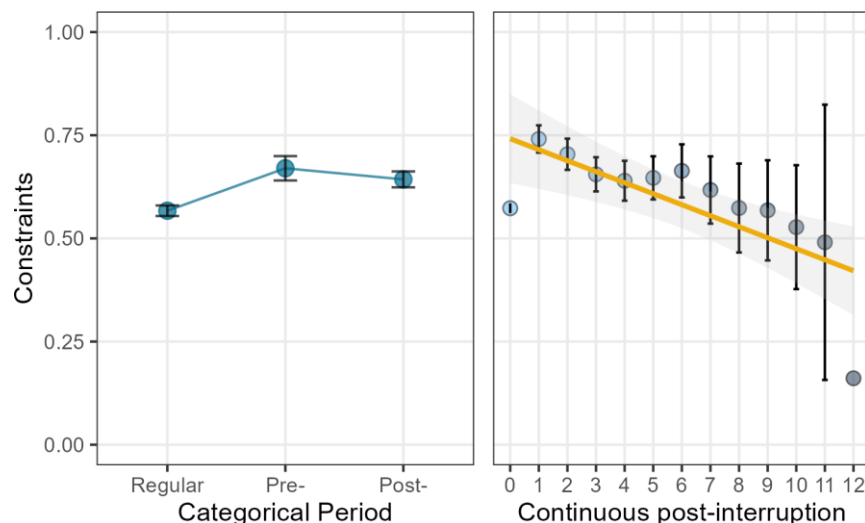
4.4.1 Legislative constraints on the executive (V-Dem, *v2xlg_legcon*)

This index measures the extent to which the legislature and other government oversight agencies (e.g., comptroller general, ombudsman) can question, investigate, and hold the executive accountable. A higher score indicates stronger legislative oversight, reflecting a greater ability to check executive power.

Constraints assess how legislative oversight evolves in the aftermath of presidential interruptions. Post-interruption, a decrease in constraints would suggest an increase in government agenda-setting power and reduced checks on the executive. Conversely, stability or an increase in constraints would indicate sustained or enhanced legislative oversight, potentially limiting the new government's capacity to consolidate control.

Figure 9 shows that legislative constraints on the executive increase significantly in the pre-interruption period compared to regular terms, possibly indicating heightened oversight as tensions rise. However, these constraints decrease post-interruption for the new government. The right panel shows a notable jump in average legislative constraints from year 0 — non-post-interruption years, which encompass both regular terms and pre-interruption terms — to post-interruption year 1; perhaps indicating heightened oversight immediately following an interruption. However, these constraints progressively decrease over the subsequent years.

Figure 9 – Mean constraints



Author's elaboration. 95% confidence intervals.

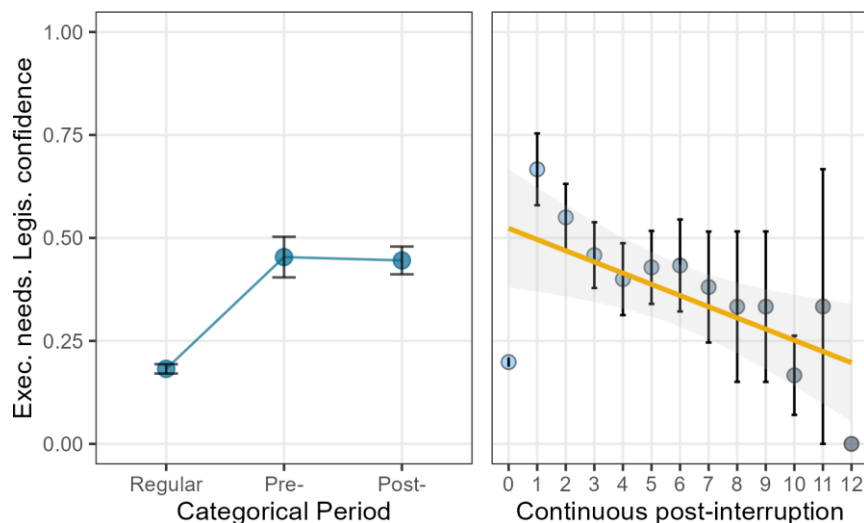
4.4.2 Confidence dimension (V-Dem, *v2x_ex_confidence*)

This variable quantifies the extent to which the executive's position relies on legislative confidence. Higher values indicate that the chief executive's tenure is more contingent on maintaining legislative support, reflecting a power dynamic where the executive is accountable to the legislature and can potentially be removed without accusations of unlawful activity. It thus help us understand shifts in executive-legislative power relations following a presidential interruption.

An increase in the need for confidence post-interruption would suggest that the new government is more reliant on legislative backing, aligning with a scenario where power is distributed more evenly, and the executive must collaborate with the legislature to maintain stability.

Figure 10 depicts an increase in executive dependence on legislative confidence from regular terms to the pre-interruption period, indicating heightened reliance on legislative support as political tensions rise. This remains high in the post-interruption term, suggesting that the new government continues to require significant legislative solidarity to maintain stability. This dependence then shows signs of decline over time.

Figure 10 – Mean confidence



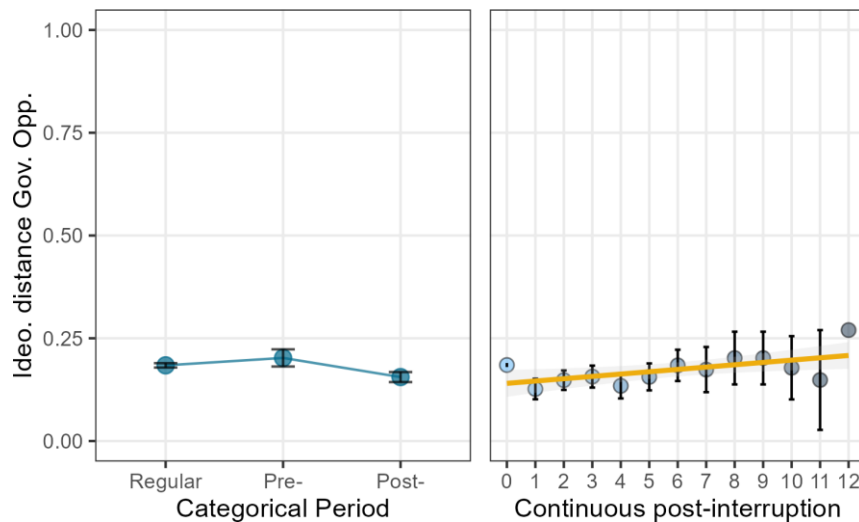
Author's elaboration. 95% confidence intervals.

4.4.3 Ideological distance between the government and the legislature (V-Dem, derived *v2xpas_economic_government*)

To construct the ideological distance between the government and legislative system, I began by selecting each ideological orientation of the governing coalition on economic issues. To address any gaps in data, I filled missing ideological positions forward and backward within each country and governing party. Therefore, this variable is static inside each specific term.

Next, I calculated the mean ideological position of each government and scaled these values for comparability. I then measured the absolute difference between the scaled government ideology and the mean ideological stance of the broader system, representing the legislature's position. The resulting ideological distance captures the degree of alignment (lower values) or divergence (higher values) in policy stances between the government and the system. This resulting variable were evaluated and confirmed to be accurate, with the results aligning with the conceptual intent, reflecting the absolute ideological distance between the government and the legislative system.

Figure 11 – Mean ideological distance



Author's elaboration. 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 11 exhibits a tiny increase in mean ideological distance between the government and legislature during the pre-interruption period. But, following a removal, this distance decreases, possibly hinting at an alignment of the new government's policies

and the legislature's preferences. This correlation is also evident in the right panel, but it appears to eventually rise back up to non-post-interruptions levels after year 5.

4.4.4 Polarization (*DPI*, derived from *polariz*)

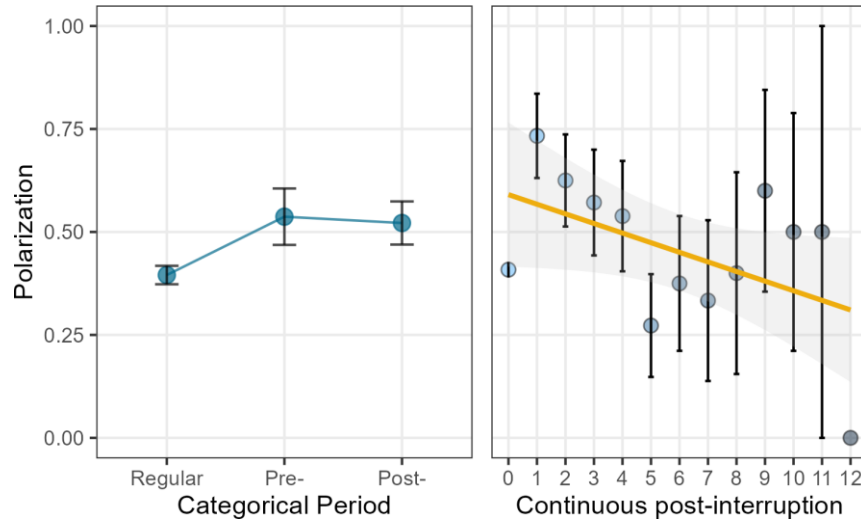
This variable has a similar function to the previous one, being a second way of measuring the ideological distance between the executive's party and the main parties within the legislature — redundancy and robustness walk side-by-side. Originally, this variable measure the maximum ideological difference between the executive's party and the principal legislative parties, based on a 3-point scale: 1 = left, 2 = center, and 3 = right. Thus, it ranged from 0 (no polarization) to 2 (maximum polarization).

To focus simply on whether polarization exists or not, any value greater than or equal to 1 was recorded to 1, indicating the presence of polarization. Observations with no polarization retained the value of 0.

As with the “ideological difference” variable, the pre-interruption period shows an increase in polarization compared to the regular terms. However, unlike the previous variable, the decrease from the pre- to the post-interruption terms appears negligible, remaining relatively high compared to the regular period. Beyond that, the average distribution post-interruption presents a hectic pattern. The right panel in shows a notable increase in polarization during the first year post-interruption, followed by a decline starting in the second year. However, after reaching a considerable low point, the trend levels off and starts to fluctuate.

There could be several explanations for the distinct behaviors of the ideological distance and polarization variables. A particularly notable factor is that ideological distance provides a continuous measure of the difference between the average ideological position of the executive and that of the legislature, offering a more granular reflection of policy alignment or divergence. Polarization, by contrast, captures the categorical (left, center, right) ideological difference between the executive's party and the principal legislative parties, making it more susceptible to coding nuances.

Figure 12 – Mean polarization



Author's elaboration. 95% confidence intervals.

4.4.5 Control Unification (V-Dem, derived from *v2psnatpar_ord*)

Identifies whether the government and legislature are controlled by the same political party or coalition. It is a dummy version of *v2psnatpar_ord*, where unified coalition control¹³ was originally coded as 0; divided party control¹⁴ as 1; and unified party control¹⁵ as 2. Thus, when the executive and legislative branches of the national governments are controlled by a single multi-party coalition or a single party, it receives the value of 1, otherwise 0.

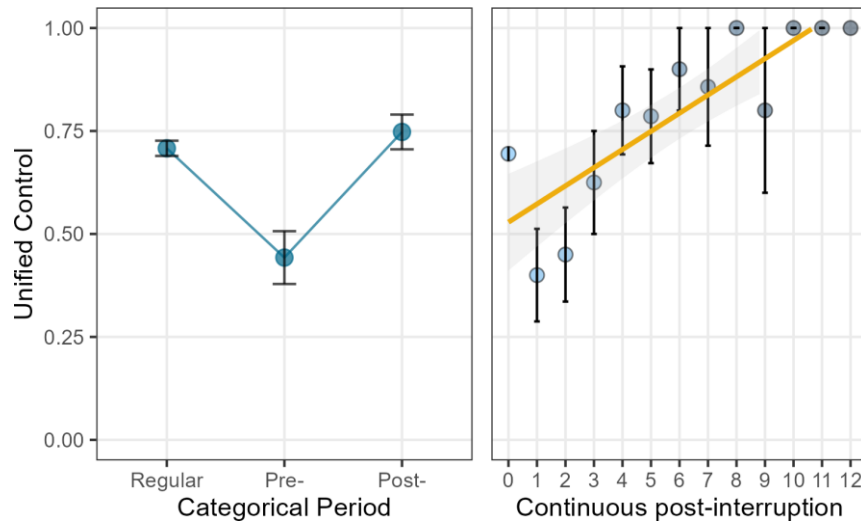
Figure 13 shows a significant decline in unified control during the pre-interruption period, reflecting heightened fragmentation as things start to heat up. However, following a presidential interruption, unified control increases sharply for the new government, surpassing the levels observed during regular terms, which might suggest that post-interruption governments effectively consolidate power, fostering alignment between the executive and legislature.

¹³ "A single multi-party coalition controls the executive and legislative branches of the national government" (Coppedge et al., 2024, p. 104).

¹⁴ "Different parties or individuals (unconnected to parties) control the executive and the legislature" (Coppedge et al., 2024, p. 104).

¹⁵ "A single party controls the executive and legislative branches of the national government" (Coppedge et al., 2024, p. 104).

Figure 13 – Mean control unification



Author's elaboration. 95% confidence intervals.

For the post-interruption period, the right panel illustrates a steady recuperation in unified control over the post-interruption term years, eventually surpassing non-post-interruption years, which could reflect the new government's efforts to consolidate power by aligning the executive and legislative branches.

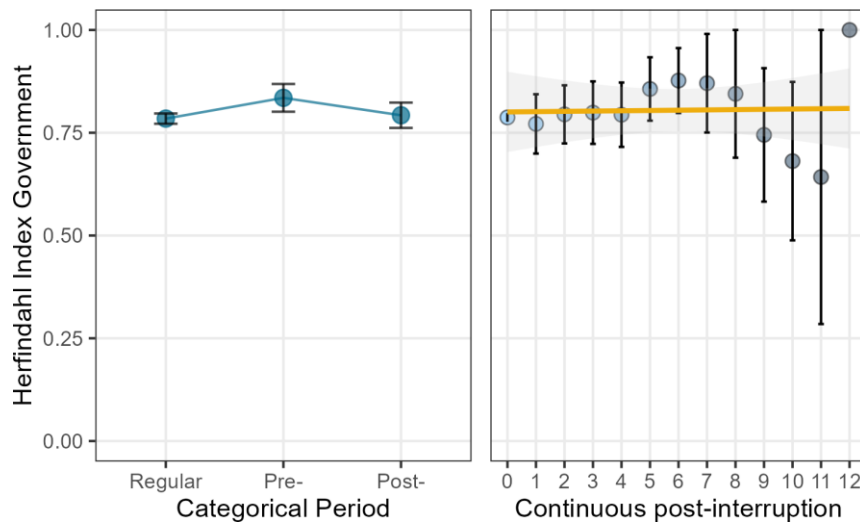
4.4.6 Herfindahl Index, Government (DPI, *herfgov*)

The Herfindahl Index for government measures the concentration of party seat shares within the governing coalition. Higher values indicate lower fragmentation, with fewer parties or a dominant party holding most of the seats, while lower values suggest higher fragmentation, with power distributed more evenly among multiple parties. An increase in the index would reflect a reduction in government fragmentation, implying a more cohesive governing coalition.

As shown in Figure 14, as the soon-to-be-interrupted government faces the threat of removal, it appears to push for a more concentrated coalition. However, post-interruption, the index declines, indicating a return to previous fragmentation levels under the new government. This might suggest that while pre-interruption governments consolidate power within a smaller group to navigate rising tensions, the post-interruption landscape sees a broader distribution of power within the governing coalition. It is possible that this shift reflects the inclusivity efforts of new governments to stabilize the political environment by accommodating a wider array of political actors.

As seen in the right panel, the post-interruption period maintains stable polarization levels comparable to those of the non-post-interruption period during the first four years. A gradual upward trend emerges over the next three years, and notably, as post-interruption governments begin to wear out, polarization increases sharply — but so do the confidence intervals.

Figure 14 – Mean Herfindahl Index gov.



Author's elaboration. 95% confidence intervals.

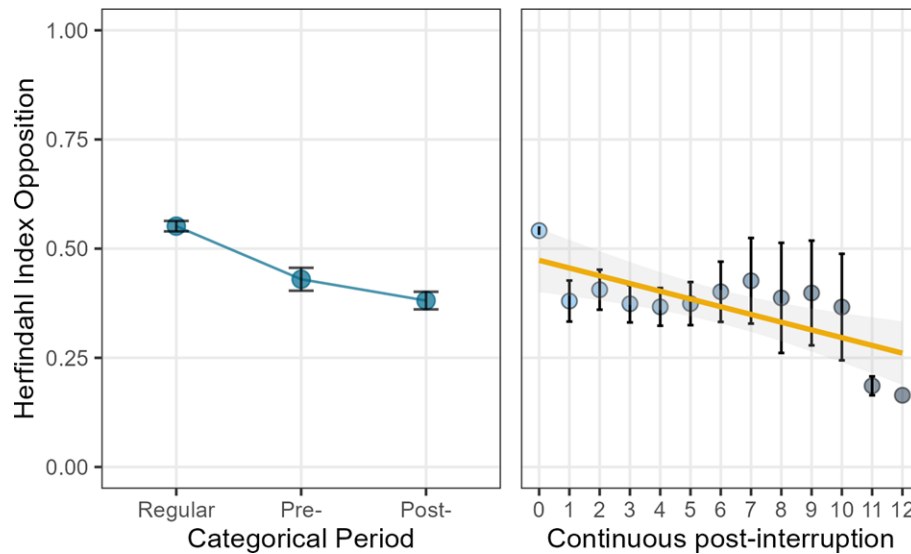
4.4.7 Herfindahl Index, Opposition (*DPI, herfopp*)

Same as the government index, but for the opposition parties. Higher values indicate less fragmentation. A decline in the index post-interruption would reflect increased fragmentation within the new opposition — probably, on average, comprised by the interrupted government and its allies —, which could weaken its ability to coordinate efforts against the new executive.

Figure 15 depicts a clear downward trend in the index from regular terms through pre-interruption and into post-interruption periods. Opposition cohesion is at its highest during regular terms, perhaps indicating opposition forces competing for influence or splintering in response to political uncertainty. In the post-interruption phase, the fragmentation deepens further, but now for what could be the previous government and its allies, reaching its lowest point. Finally, the right panel shows a more polarized opposition post-interruption, which could be an indicative of the diluted ability of the new

opposition to act cohesively, as former government actors struggle to adapt to the new — often threatening — political landscape.

Figure 15 – Mean Herfindahl Index opp.



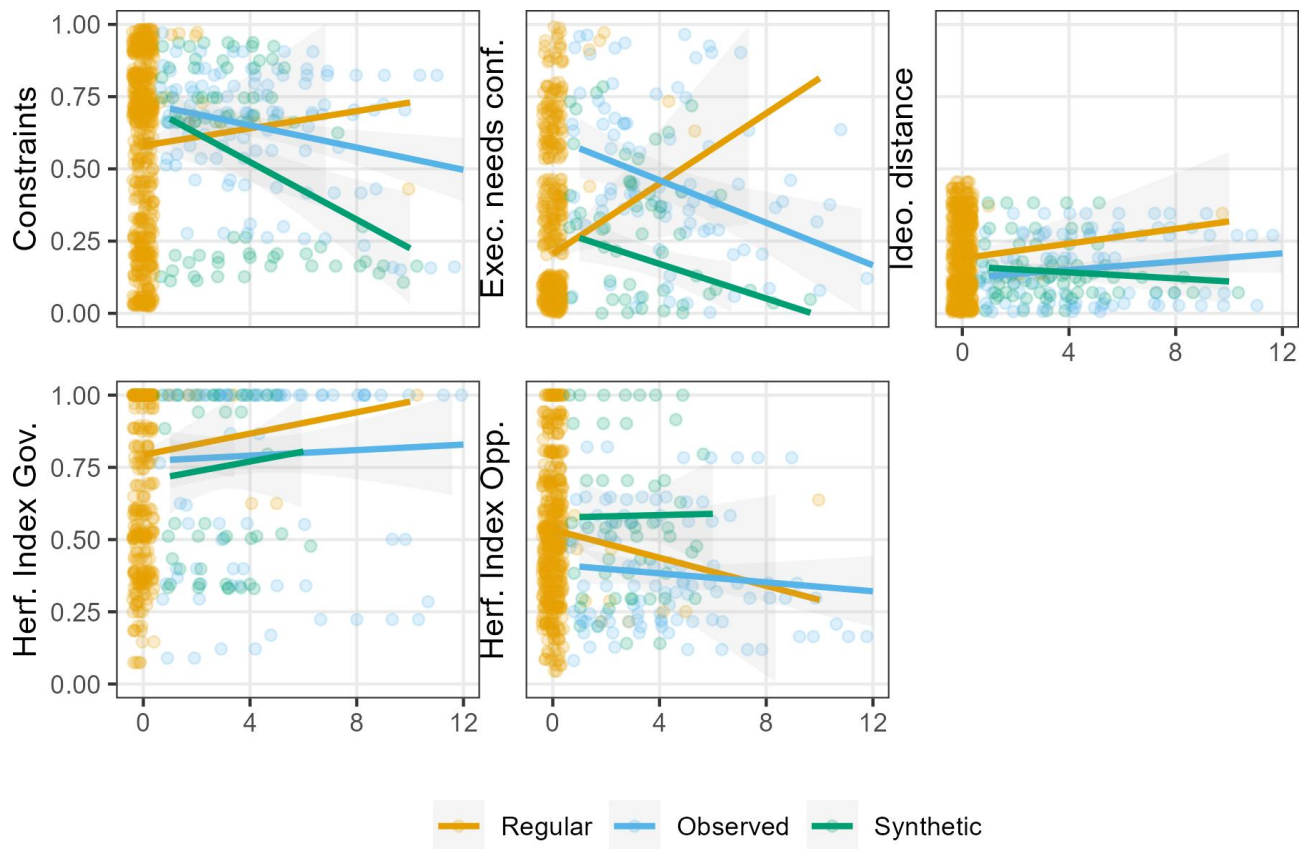
Author's elaboration. 95% confidence intervals.

4.5 Observed and synthetic interruptions

Figure 16 and Figure 17 illustrate the difference between regular periods, observed (real) post-interruptions terms and synthetic post-interruption terms. They follow, respectively, the logic of blocks 1 and 2.

Legislative constraints exhibit a gradual upward trend during regular terms, consistent with the documented strengthening of legislative oversight in Latin America over recent decades. At the start of observed post-interruption periods, constraints are notably higher on average, reflecting the expected pre-interruption spike, before gradually declining over time.

Figure 16 – Regular, observed interruptions and synthetic interruptions terms



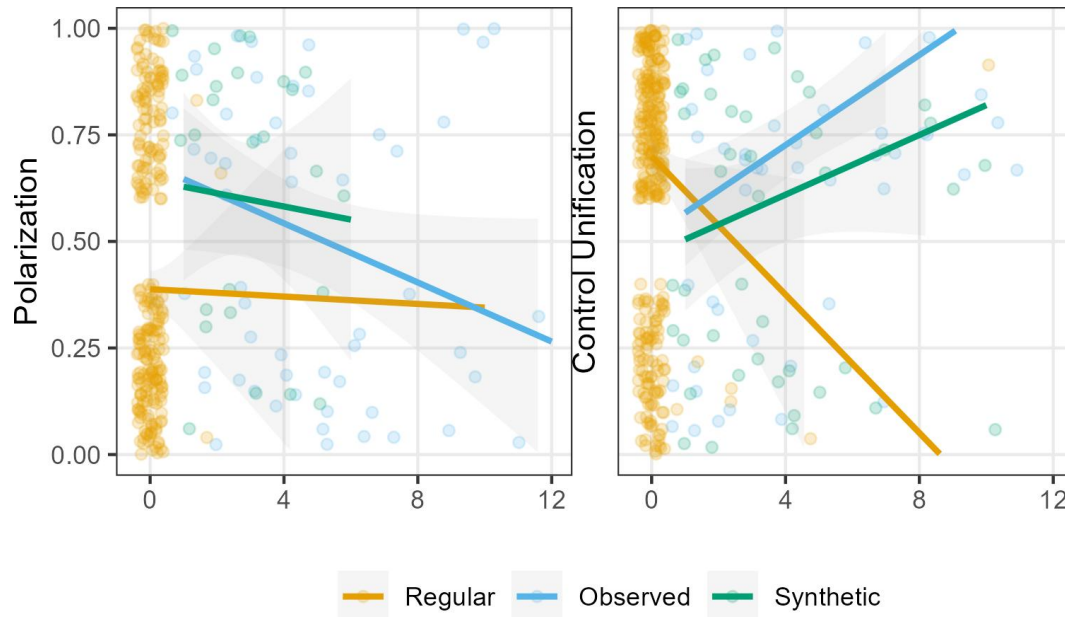
Author's elaboration. 95% confidence intervals.

A similar pattern emerges during synthetic interruption periods: newly elected governments not following presidential falls experience an initial increase in constraints, followed by a downward trend as their terms progress. However, synthetic terms begin at a lower constraint level compared to real interruptions, and their decline is more pronounced. This suggests that real post-interruption governments face higher sustained levels of legislative oversight than governments formed during regular electoral transitions.

Regarding the executive's reliance on legislative confidence, regular terms show a steady upward trend in this dependence, while observed and synthetic interruptions reveal contrasting effects. Post-interruption executives face heightened oversight, requiring significantly more legislative confidence than their counterparts in "normal" terms. This underscores the intensified scrutiny and institutional demands placed on governments following interruptions.

Both observed and synthetic post-interruption terms exhibit a tiny ideological alignment between the executive and the legislature compared to regular terms, with the ideological gap slightly narrowing for the synthetic terms as time goes by.

Figure 17 – Regular, observed interruptions and synthetic interruptions terms



Author's elaboration. 95% confidence intervals.

The Herfindahl Index for government concentration reveals similar patterns across scenarios. Non-post-interruption terms experience a more pronounced upward trend compared to true post-removal terms, though both start at slightly lower concentration levels than regular terms. For the opposition, synthetic interruptions exhibit a steady but almost imperceptible growth. In contrast, regular terms show a clear downward trend in opposition concentration, reflecting a gradual fragmentation over time. Observed interruptions start on average at a lower concentration, with a slight decline.

Polarization begins at a higher level compared to regular terms and exhibits a steeper decline in the observed post-interruption periods, with the synthetic post-interruption terms showing a similar but less pronounced downward trend. In contrast, control unification of the government experiences a sharp decline during regular terms, while both observed and synthetic post-interruption terms display a correspondingly steep upward trend. Notably, both observed and synthetic post-interruption periods start from a lower baseline compared to regular terms.

4.6 Similar concepts, different measurements

It is a bit perplexing that some variables show distinct behaviors despite their shared conceptual underpinnings. This divergence arises primarily from differences in how each one captures the nuances of both ideological and structural dynamics. For instance, while “ideological distance” focuses on the relative alignment of the government and legislature, measured through the aggregate ideological positions of all coalition members weighted by seat shares, “polarization” isolates the most extreme ideological difference between the executive and key legislative players. These distinct focuses mean that while ideological distance provides a smooth, continuous measure that reflects systemic shifts, polarization is more reactive to specific events or periods of heightened political tension.

This is particularly evident when analyzing pre- and post-interruption periods. Ideological distance shows a gradual narrowing of the alignment gap post-removal, indicative of a recalibration effort by the new government to foster legislative cohesion. In contrast, polarization exhibits sharper fluctuations, especially during the immediate aftermath of interruptions, as new political elites interact in a restructured landscape. Polarization’s categorical design magnifies these episodic shifts, whereas ideological distance smooths over the political noise, emphasizing long-term trends.

Similarly, “Herfindahl index” and “control unification” reveal divergent yet complementary insights. The index, with its continuous scale, captures incremental changes in coalition fragmentation, offering detailed snapshots of how power is distributed among coalition partners. Its sensitivity to minor shifts allows for an in-depth understanding of coalition dynamics, especially as pre-interruption governments consolidate power in response to instability. Control unification, however, abstracts these dynamics into broader categories, focusing on the overarching structure of power. This approach effectively identifies when governments shift between unified and divided control, but it cannot account for variations in the degree of unification within these categories. Consequently, post-interruption periods where governments consolidate their base are reflected more clearly in the Herfindahl index than in control unification, which instead highlights structural transitions, such as shifts from divided to unified control.

These differences are not merely methodological quirks, but rather reflect the varying emphases of each source. While Herfindahl index is adept at capturing the spectrum of fragmentation within coalitions, control unification is designed to highlight ordinal shifts in control structures. Both perspectives are equally important and can only enrich the findings, allowing for triangulation of effects and the robustness of the results.

4.7 Cases of interest

Table 6 gives a brief description of each case of interrupted presidency coded in the data frame. Balaguer (1996, Dominican Republic) was not included. By the end of his decades-long rule, the president faced increasing opposition and U.S. pressure, particularly after the fraud-ridden 1994 elections. This led to the "Pact for Democracy", which cut his term short by two years and mandated new elections in 1996. Accepting the pact as a favorable exit, Balaguer worked to block his rival José Francisco Peña Gómez from winning by supporting Leonel Fernández, securing a transition that preserved aspects of his authoritarian legacy¹⁶. Thus, I judged that his case was comparatively different from the others removals, which kept him out of the coding.

Table 6 – Cases of interest

	President	Successors	Description
ARG	Raúl Alfonsín (1989)	Carlos Menem (elected)	Alfonsín faced mounting challenges as he struggled to control the military and stabilize the economy. Amid growing instability, opposition leader Carlos Menem accused Alfonsín of plotting an "autogolpe" to maintain power. The situation worsened as an electricity crisis triggered riots and looting, leading Alfonsín to transfer power early to president-elect Menem. Menem governed in a more favorable environment than Alfonsín. His party held an absolute majority in the Senate and came close to achieving one in Congress.

¹⁶ <https://nacla.org/article/negotiated-elections-old-boss-steps-side> (retrieved October 5, 2024).

President	Successors	Description
Fernando de la Rúa (2001)	Adolfo Rodríguez Saá (interim)	After de la Rúa's resignation, interim Presidents Adolfo Rodríguez Saá and Eduardo Duhalde also resigned and called early elections. Néstor Kirchner, his successor from the same party, consolidated his position through alliances, despite lacking an absolute majority (Mustapic, 2001).
	↓	
	Duhalde Maldonado (interim)	
	↓	
	Néstor Kirchner (elected)	
Hernán Siles Zuazo (1985)	Angel Víctor Paz Estenssoro (elected)	Zuazo faced widespread strikes erupting across both public and private sectors as his opposition began brewing impeachment attempts. Amidst escalating tensions, Zuazo was kidnapped for ten hours, intensifying the push for his removal. Multiple impeachment efforts followed, prompting Zuazo to cut his term short by a year and call early elections.
		After election, Paz Estenssoro secured legislative backing by adopting the majority's economic policies (Botello & Barretos, 2020).
BOL	Sánchez de Lozada (2003)	Bolivia faced significant social unrest over plans to export natural gas through Chile. Evo Morales and his party, Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), stepped up as major players. As tensions escalated, Vice President Carlos Mesa publicly distanced himself from President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, withdrawing his support on October 13, 2003 ¹⁷ , a week before Lozada's interruption.
	Carlos Mesa (2005)	
	Enrique Veltzé (interim)	Evo Morales joined business sector leaders and brought the country to a halt, with nationwide protests and roadblocks. Amid party fragmentation and social turmoil, Mesa resigned.
	↓	
	Evo Morales (elected)	Supreme Court President Enrique Veltzé assumed the presidency with a constitutional mandate to call new elections within a year, in which Morales was elected (Mustapic, 2001).

¹⁷ <https://www.la-razon.com/lr-en-la-memoria/2022/10/17/la-masacre-de-2003-echo-a-goni-y-causo-la-sucesion-de-mesa/> (retrieved October 5, 2024).

President	Successors	Description
Evo Morales (2019)	Jeanine Áñez (interim) ↓ Luis Arce (elected)	Despite losing a 2016 referendum that would have allowed him to run for a fourth time, Morales secured candidacy through a Constitutional Court ruling. During the 2019 election, irregularities reported by the Organization of American States intensified public unrest. As demonstrations escalated, Morales lost support from the military, prompting his resignation along with that of his vice president and the leaders of both legislative chambers — despite having secured a majority in Congress. Jeanine Áñez, the second vice president of the Senate, assumed the presidency. Luis Arce, from MAS, was elected the following year.
Fernando Collor de Mello (1992)	Itamar Franco (VP) ↓ Fernando Henrique Cardoso (elected)	Exposure of a corruption scheme led by Collor's former campaign financier, PC Farias, with links to Collor's relatives in Petrobras. Strikes at Petrobras caused an oil shortage, leaving Collor politically isolated. Widespread protests ensued, leading to Collor's impeachment. Franco's patronage-driven coalition-building approach contrasted with Collor's isolated governance style, ultimately benefiting the legislature, which aligned with Franco's broader-based government (Weyland 2005, apud. Hochstetler & Samuels, 2011).
BRA		
Dilma Rousseff (2016)	Michel Temer (VP) ↓ Jair Bolsonaro (elected)	Nation-wide truckers' strike and large protests demanding Rousseff's removal. Rousseff was accused of using loans from state-backed banks to cover a budget deficit before the 2014 election, leading to her impeachment. Michel Temer assumed the role of acting president on May 12, 2016. His administration prioritized stability in Congress by forming a coalition with center-right and former opposition parties. By July, he had strengthened his base when Rodrigo Maia was elected President of the Chamber of Deputies (Nunes & Melo, 2017).

	President	Successors	Description
ECU	Abdala Jaime Bucaram (1997)	Fabián Alarcón Rivera (interim) ↓ Jorge Jamil Mahuad (elected)	Bucaram declared a state of emergency upon taking office, launching an anti-corruption campaign. However, his austerity measures sparked widespread protests. In response, Congress ultimately removed him, citing “mental incapacity”. The Constitution required the vice president to succeed the president in cases of removal. However, Congress, favoring its president Fabián Alarcón, elected him with a two-thirds majority over Vice President Rosalía Arteaga.
	Jorge Jamil Mahuad (2000)	↓ Lucio Gutiérrez (elected)	Indigenous groups, led by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), and dissident military officers, including Lieutenant Colonel Lucio Gutiérrez, occupied the National Congress. This coalition formed a three-person junta comprising CONAIE leader Antonio Vargas, Lucio Gutiérrez, and former Supreme Court Justice Carlos Solórzano. However, within hours, the military branch dissolved the coalition in a coup-within-a-coup-within-a-revolution, installing Vice President Gustavo Noboa as president. Noboa had come to oppose many of Mahuad’s policies (Marsteintredet & Malamud, 2020). His initial relationship with Congress was cooperative, as lawmakers sought stability and continuity amid economic crisis and widespread public discontent.
	Lucio Gutiérrez (2005)	Luis Alfredo Palacio (VP) ↓ Rafael Correa (elected)	During this period, Ecuadorian elites showed little commitment to stability and governance, prioritizing immediate gains over institutional continuity (Martinez, 2021). This environment allowed Congress to capitalize on political crises to expedite presidential removals when alliances shifted or incumbents became isolated. Key members of Parliament actively encouraged the public to take to the streets in support of ousting Bucaram, Mahuad, and Gutiérrez (Ospina, 2005; Marsteintredet, 2009).

	President	Successors	Description
GUA	Jorge Serrano (1993)	Ramiro de León Carpio (interim)	Serrano attempted a self-coup in hopes of ending a prolonged deadlock with the opposition-controlled Congress. He dissolved Congress, detained Supreme Court judges, and announced upcoming elections for a constitutional assembly. However, his actions faced strong opposition from influential groups, business associations, and factions within the military (Martinez, 2021).
		↓	
		Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen (elected)	Lacking both popular and elite support, Serrano was ultimately forced to resign just days after his attempted coup. His Vice President, Gustavo Espina, followed suit mere five days later.
GUA	Otto Pérez Molina (2015)	Alejandro Maldonado (VP)	Guatemala was engulfed by the "La Línea" corruption scandal, a customs fraud network implicating high-ranking officials, including Vice President Roxana Baldetti and Pérez Molina. The Guatemalan Congress, reflecting the public's demand for justice, voted to strip Molina of his immunity.
		↓	
		Jimmy Morales (elected)	Facing arrest, the president resigned and was succeeded by his vice president, Alejandro Maldonado, who had assumed the role only six months earlier.
HON	José Manuel Zelaya (2009)	Roberto Micheletti	Zelaya, elected on a liberal platform but leaning toward the left after taking office, attempted to hold a referendum on constitutional reform. Met with strong opposition from Congress, he was arrested by the military and exiled to Costa Rica, marking a military intervention with substantial involvement from the civil elite. The opposition preserved the conservative political structure, preventing what they saw as a potential shift toward leftist governance.
		Baín (interim)	
		↓	
		Porfirio Lobo Sosa (elected)	Roberto Micheletti, then president of Congress, served as Zelaya's interim successor. Porfirio Lobo Sosa, from the opposition, was subsequently elected.

	President	Successors	Description
PAR	Raúl Cubas Grau (1999)		Raúl Cubas faced intense opposition from within his own Partido Colorado (PC) after his controversial decision to release General Lino Oviedo, a move that sharply divided the party. Tensions peaked with the assassination of Vice President Luis María Argaña, sparking protests and mounting pressure that led to Cubas's resignation in 1999. His successor, González Macchi, also from the PC, soon encountered his own corruption scandals, further embroiling the party in controversy (Pérez-Liñán, 2007).
		Luis González Macchi (interim)	
		↓	
		Nicanor Duarte (elected)	Given the PC's overwhelming dominance in Paraguayan politics (Hochstetler, 2006), both the causes and outcomes of Cubas's departure played out largely within party ranks, leaving the opposition sidelined and with little political advantage from the upheaval. This contrasts sharply with the later interruption of President Fernando Lugo, marking the first time in nearly three decades that the PC found itself in the opposition.
PER	Fernando Lugo (2012)	Federico Franco (interim)	Lugo, who ended PC's 28-year rule, was removed following a deadly land conflict in Curuguaty, which gave Congress grounds for impeachment due to "poor performance". The next day, the Senate voted 39 to 4 in favor of his rapid removal.
		↓	
		Horacio Cartes (elected)	Lugo's vice president, Luis Gómez, served the remainder of the presidential term, after which PC returned to power — a position it holds to this date.
PER	Alberto Fujimori (2000)	Valentín Paniagua (interim)	After losing his legislative majority, Fujimori saw Valentín Paniagua, from the opposition, elected as president of Congress. Recognizing this shift in parliamentary control, Fujimori resigned via fax from Japan. The second vice president, Ricardo Márquez, had also resigned, making Paniagua next in line.
		↓	
		Alejandro Toledo (elected)	He served as interim president for eight months, overseeing a transition period until the election of Alejandro Toledo, a prominent anti-Fujimori figure.

President	Successors	Description
Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (2018)	Martin Vizcarra (VP)	Kuczynski struggled to govern effectively from the start, lacking a coalition to counterbalance the opposition-dominated Congress led by Fuerza Popular (FP), Keiko Fujimori's party. Surviving his first impeachment attempt through a controversial pardon of Alberto Fujimori, he faced backlash and another impeachment soon after. When evidence suggested his pardon involved corrupt dealings, he resigned in March 2018.
	Manuel Merino (interim)	Vizcarra, Kuczynski's successor, also faced constant opposition from the FP-controlled Congress. Seeking to curb rampant corruption, he implemented anti-corruption reforms through a public referendum, briefly boosting his popularity. However, Congress obstructed his efforts, leading him to dissolve it in 2019. In 2020, after allegations of corruption as governor, Congress impeached Vizcarra.
Martin Vizcarra (2020)	↓ Francisco Sagasti (interim)	His removal led to mass protests, and within days, his successor, Manuel Merino, also resigned under public pressure. Francisco Sagasti oversaw the transition period until the election of left-wing Pedro Castillo in 2021.
	↓ Pedro Castillo (elected)	Castillo, a left-wing candidate, narrowly defeated Keiko Fujimori, whose party saw its share of the vote fall from 36% in the 2016 elections to just 7%. Many former Fujimori supporters shifted to smaller, anti-establishment parties that offer a similar conservative platform ¹⁸ .
Pedro Castillo (2022)	Dina Boluarte (VP)	During his tenure, Castillo faced multiple impeachment attempts. Hours before his third impeachment trial, he announced the dissolution of Congress and the establishment of an emergency government. Congress proceeded with the impeachment, resulting in Castillo's removal and arrest. Vice President Dina Boluarte was sworn in as Peru's first female president amid a highly fragmented Congress.

¹⁸ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-26/peruvians-to-elect-new-congress-amid-scandals-and-voter-apathy> (retrieved October 5, 2024).

	President	Successors	Description
VEN		Ramón	In 1992, two military coup attempts targeted Pérez's government.
		José	Neither succeeded, but the first, led by Hugo Chávez, marked the
	Carlos	Velásquez	beginning of his influence (Gayosso & Cadena, 2017).
	Andrés	(interim)	Pérez's own party, Acción Democrática, turned against him amid
	Pérez	↓	corruption allegations. In 1993, they expelled Pérez and supported his
	(1993)	Rafael	impeachment ¹⁹ . After Pérez's removal, Congress appointed Ramón
		Caldera	José Velásquez as interim president until new elections.
		(elected)	

Author's elaboration.

¹⁹ <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2022/02/08/there-once-was-a-party-accion-democratica/> (retrieved October 5, 2024).

5 RECALIBRATING POLITICS: THE DYNAMICS OF PRESIDENTIAL INTERRUPTIONS

This chapter presents the results of the statistical models, which are organized into key thematic areas to systematically address the research questions and hypotheses. The structure reflects the two main analytical focuses of this study: the dynamics of inter-branch relations before and after presidential interruptions, and their implications for political stability and realignment.

Block 1 examines critical variables such as legislative constraints, government concentration, opposition concentration, and the degree of executive dependency on the legislature, in order to provide a comprehensive view of the structural and strategic conditions surrounding interruptions and highlight how power dynamics evolve as governments face heightened pressures leading up to their removal and, consequently, how these dynamics stabilize or shift in the aftermath.

Block 2 shifts the focus to broader ideological and structural dimensions, with an emphasis on political polarization and government control unification. It explores how polarization between the executive and legislature intensifies or abates in the lead-up to and aftermath of interruptions, reflecting deeper fractures or alignments within the political landscape. It also examines the degree of unification within government coalitions, assessing how interruptions serve as a mechanism for recalibrating political cohesion and realigning power dynamics within the executive branch.

Through the following analyses, I seek to connect empirical findings with theoretical frameworks, demonstrating if and how interruptions reshape the political landscape. The models show a possible recalibration of the legislative arena triggered by presidential interruptions — revealing them as transformative events that reconfigure power relations and governance strategies, rather than undesirable, democracy-threatening phenomena.

Before interruptions, the legislature responds to governance challenges with increased oversight and bargaining leverage, signaling heightened vigilance and a shift of power toward the legislative branch. Simultaneously, the executive's reliance on legislative support underscores a precarious inter-branch dynamic, marked by mutual

dependency. Escalating polarization and weakening government unification signal intensifying ideological divides and coalition fragmentation. These dynamics destabilize governance, heightening the likelihood of interruptions by exacerbating executive-legislative conflict and undermining coalition strength.

In the aftermath, however, interruptions serve as a reset mechanism, fostering reductions in polarization and significant increases in government unification. Post-interruption administrations prioritize stability, with a preemptive focus on coalition consolidation emerging as a balancing countermeasure, a trend that intensifies after interruptions. Beyond this focus, post-interruption periods are characterized by sustained legislative constraints, persistent executive dependency, and further government concentration. These changes suggest a deliberate effort to solidify political stability and avoid repeating previous vulnerabilities.

5.1 Block 1

5.1.1 Categorical predictors

5.1.1.1 Pre-interruption

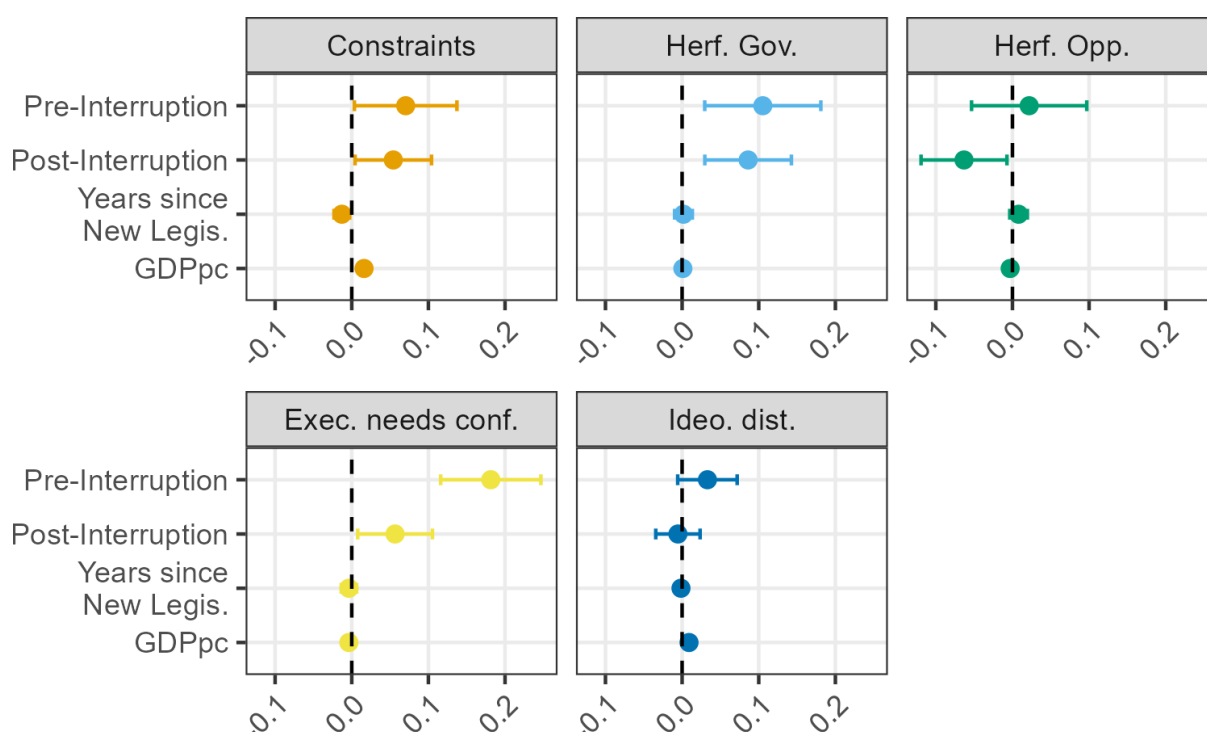
Both the MMR and BMM models indicate a significant increase in legislative constraints during pre-interruption periods compared to regular governance terms. Specifically, the MMR model estimates a 0.07 increase ($p < 0.05$), while the BMM model mirrors this with an estimated increase of 0.07 (95% Credible Interval [CI]: 0 to 0.14). This convergence suggests a robust finding across different modeling approaches.

Beyond that, the heightened legislative constraints imply that the legislature becomes more assertive or possibly obstructive as a response to increasing political instability, where heightened constraints serve as a preemptive strategy to curtail executive overreach and manage governance risks. This behavior may also be driven by growing dissatisfaction with the executive branch or strategic positioning by opposition parties seeking to capitalize on the president's weakening political standing.

Similarly, there is a notable peak in executive dependency on legislative confidence during pre-interruption periods. The MMR model estimates an increase of 0.18 ($p <$

0.001), and the BMM model provides an identical estimate with a 95% CI of 0.12 to 0.25. This result indicates a period of heightened bargaining, where the executive must actively seek legislative support to forestall interruption, likely at the expense of policy autonomy. This dynamic could highlight a balance shift with the legislature's growing leverage in the power equation, consistent with the idea that political actors strategically reposition themselves during crises to maximize influence, where the executive must negotiate and possibly make concessions to the legislature to avoid further destabilization.

Figure 18 – Categorical predictor estimates, MMR



Author's elaboration.

The ideological distance between the government and the legislature shows a marginal increase during pre-interruption periods. The MMR model estimates a 0.03 rise ($p < 0.1$), while the BMM model reports a similar effect (95% CI: -0.01 to 0.07). Although the statistical significance is borderline, this slight increase may signify growing ideological divergence as tensions between branches escalate, consequently making collaboration more challenging. However, this may not be the primary driver of pre-interruption dynamics, where pragmatic bargaining likely dominates over ideological alignment.

Both models find a significant increase in government concentration, measured by the Herfindahl Index, during pre-interruption periods. The MMR model estimates a 0.11 increase ($p < 0.01$), slightly higher than the BMM model's estimate of 0.10 (95% CI: 0.02 to 0.18). This result suggests that governments respond to impending interruptions by consolidating power within their coalitions, likely to enhance their legislative shield and project stability. This proactive concentration would serve as a defensive strategy to deter opposition challenges by presenting a united front. Furthermore, by strengthening internal cohesion, the government may aim to enhance its negotiating power and even deter potential defections that could precipitate an interruption.

Figure 19 – Conditional effects for the categorical predictor, BMM



Author's elaboration.

In contrast, the MMR model identifies a positive but statistically insignificant correlation in opposition concentration during the pre-interruption period, aligning with the BMM model's findings. The lack of significant consolidation may reflect the difficulty of unifying disparate opposition actors during the chaotic lead-up to an interruption; or that the observable consolidation of the challengers is not a primary factor influencing removals.

5.1.1.2 *Post-interruption*

Post-interruption periods see a stabilization of legislative constraints, though at slightly elevated levels relative to regular terms. The MMR model estimates a 0.05 increase ($p < 0.05$), slightly below the BMM model's estimate of 0.06 (95% CI: 0.01 to 0.11). This suggests that, while legislative oversight relaxes somewhat compared to pre-interruption peaks, it remains heightened, likely reflecting a cautious approach to governance by the legislature. This persistence of constraints might indicate that removals, while stabilizing the immediate crisis, leave behind a residue of legislative vigilance.

For executive dependency, both models observe a decrease in the executive need for legislative confidence post-interruption, although it remains higher than in regular governance periods. The MMR and BMM models both estimate a 0.06 decrease ($p < 0.05$; 95% CI: 0.01 to 0.10). This result signals a gradual restoration of executive autonomy, as the new government seeks to assert control and distance itself from the conditions that led to its predecessor's fall. However, the elevated baseline compared to regular terms suggests that the legislature continues to exert influence, likely as a deterrent against potential overreach. The decrease may also reflect initial goodwill or honeymoon periods often granted to new administrations, allowing them more leeway to work with. However, the continued elevated dependency stresses the importance of legislative cooperation for governance stability.

Post-interruption government-legislature ideological distance shows a negative but statistically insignificant correlation, consistent across both models. This result suggests that ideological alignment between the executive and legislature improves somewhat, likely as part of the recalibration process aimed at fostering stability. The lack of significance, however, implies that this alignment is not uniform, possibly due to residual tensions or competing priorities within the legislature.

The Herfindahl Index for government concentration remains significantly elevated post-interruption. The MMR model estimates a 0.09 increase ($p < 0.01$), closely matching the BMM model's estimate of 0.08 (95% CI: 0.03 to 0.14). This finding underscores the role of coalition consolidation as a stabilizing mechanism for new administrations. By

strengthening their internal cohesion, post-interruption governments likely aim to secure legislative backing and minimize risks of renewed instability. The consolidation may involve incorporating key parties, appeasing influential legislators, or aligning policy priorities to maintain unity. A cohesive governing coalition can enhance policy implementation and reduce vulnerabilities to potential challenges.

Table 7 – categorical predictor, BMM and MMR models

Dep. vars.		BMM			MMR		
		Estimate	L-95% CI	U-95% CI	Estimate	t value	p
Constraints	Intercept	0.49	0.39	0.59	0.51	9.3	0***
	Pre-int.	0.07	0	0.14	0.07	2.1	0.04*
	Post-int.	0.06	0.01	0.11	0.05	2.1	0.03*
	Years leg.	-0.01	-0.02	0	-0.01	-2.5	0.01*
	GDPpc	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	5.4	0***
	R ²	0.55			0.55		
Exec. needs conf.	Intercept	0.27	0.13	0.42	0.36	6.9	0***
	Pre-int.	0.18	0.12	0.25	0.18	5.4	0***
	Post-int.	0.06	0.01	0.1	0.06	2.3	0.02*
	Years leg.	0	-0.01	0.01	0	-0.7	0.47
	GDPpc	0	-0.01	0	0	-1.3	0.19
	R ²	0.67			0.67		
Ideological distance	Intercept	0.11	0.06	0.16	0.02	0.8	0.44
	Pre-int.	0.03	-0.01	0.07	0.03	1.7	0.09•
	Post-int.	-0.01	-0.03	0.02	-0.01	-0.4	0.7
	Years leg.	0	-0.01	0	0	-0.5	0.62
	GDPpc	0.01	0	0.01	0.01	5.2	0***
	R ²	0.3			0.29		
Herfindahl gov.	Intercept	0.78	0.67	0.9	0.8	13.1	0***
	Pre-int.	0.1	0.02	0.18	0.11	2.7	0.007**
	Post-int.	0.08	0.03	0.14	0.09	3	0.003**
	Years leg.	0	-0.01	0.01	0	0.3	0.76
	GDPpc	0	-0.01	0.01	0	0.3	0.77
	R ²	0.39			0.38		
Herfindahl opp.	Intercept	0.52	0.42	0.62	0.49	8.1	0***
	Pre-int.	0.01	-0.06	0.09	0.02	0.6	0.57
	Post-int.	-0.07	-0.13	-0.02	-0.06	-2.2	0.03*
	Years leg.	0.01	0	0.02	0.01	1.4	0.17
	GDPpc	0	-0.01	0	0	-0.9	0.37
	R ²	0.33			0.32		
N. obs.		574			574		

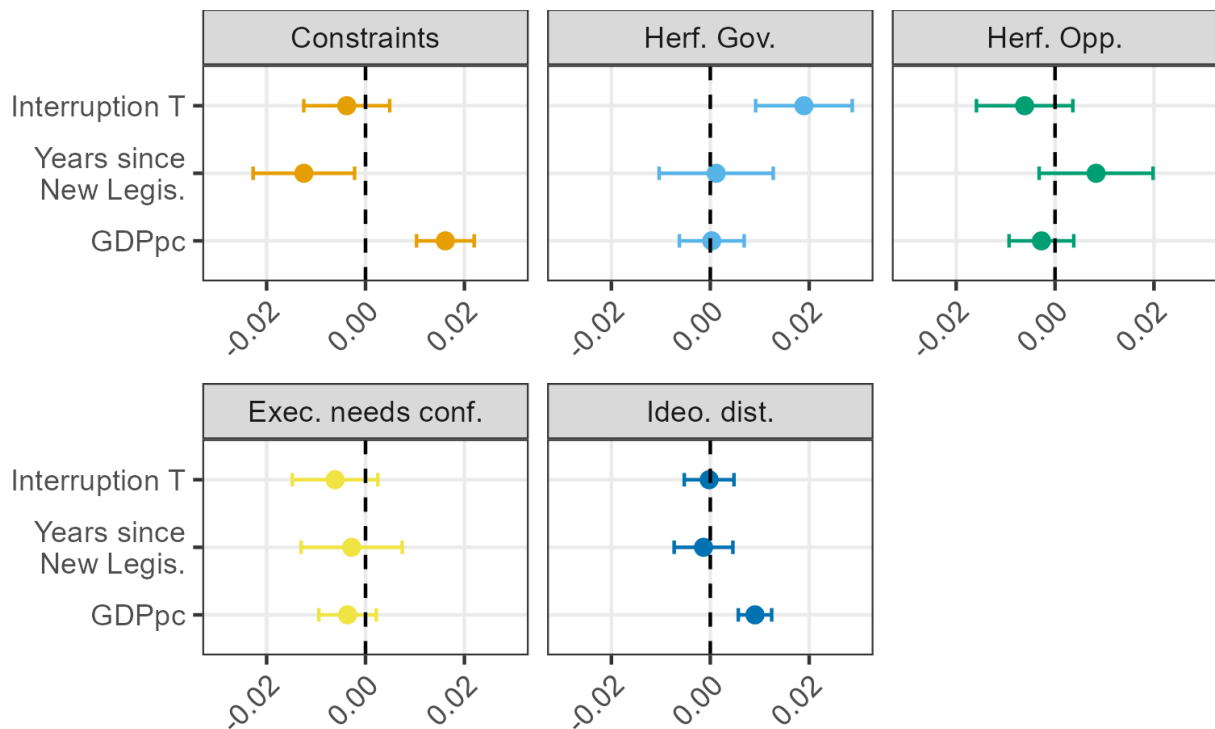
Author's elaboration. All standard deviation of the posteriors (BMM) are below 0.08. All standard errors (MMR) are below 0.06. Country fixed effects suppress due to length. Bayesian diagnostics in annex. ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; •p < 0.1.

In contrast, opposition concentration decreases significantly post-interruption, with the MMR model estimating a decline of 0.06 ($p < 0.05$), while the BMM model reports a slightly larger reduction of 0.07 (95% CI: -0.13 to -0.02). This fragmentation may reflect the disarray within the former governing parties now transitioning into opposition roles. The defeat and subsequent realignment could lead to splintering as factions pursue different strategies or as new opposition actors emerge. The weakened opposition may struggle to present a unified challenge to the new government, potentially allowing the administration to consolidate power more effectively.

5.1.2 Continuous predictor

The results for continuous predictors reveal no significant yearly effect on legislative constraints during the post-interruption period, for both the MMR and BMM models. The variable shows a minor, non-statistically significant decline per year. This lack of temporal variation suggests that the heightened constraints observed immediately post-interruption persist as a structural feature, possibly reflecting a cautious, long-term recalibration of inter-branch dynamics.

Figure 20 – Continuous predictor estimates, MMR

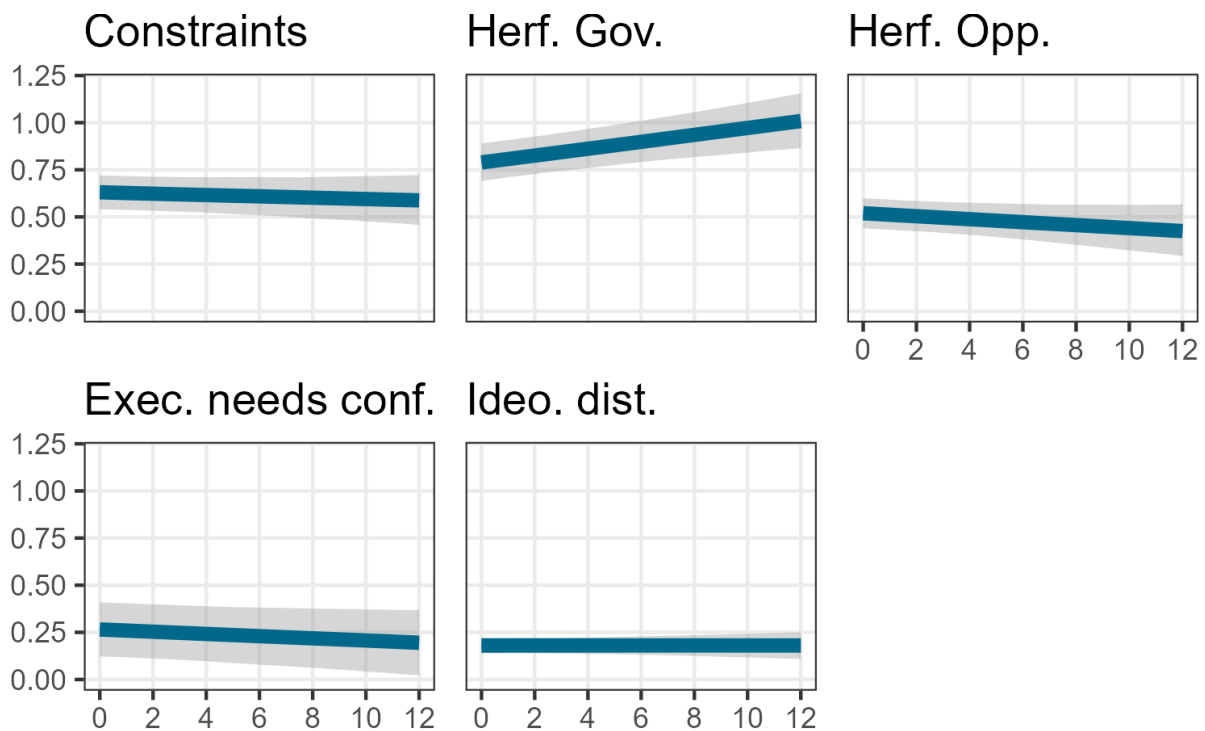


Author's elaboration.

Similarly, there are no significant post-removal changes in executive dependency or ideological distance between the government and legislature. This stability, specially concerning the government's need for legislative confidence, might hint to a plateau effect, where political dynamics settle into a new, legislature-leaning equilibrium.

A notable exception is the consistent increase in government concentration over time. The MMR model reveals an average increase of 0.02 points per year ($p < 0.001$), with the BMM model corroborating this trend (95% CI: 0.02 to 0.03). This could reflect at an ongoing consolidation efforts by the new government, reinforcing the idea that post-interruption administrations prioritize coalition-building to enhance governance stability and reduce vulnerability to legislative challenges.

Figure 21 – Conditional effects for the continuous predictor, BMM



Author's elaboration.

The opposition's fragmentation, meanwhile, remains largely unaffected over time, with a non-significant negative trend. This suggests that the opposition does not substantially recover or reorganize in the post-interruption period. Persistent fragmentation may limit the opposition's effectiveness in challenging government initiatives or presenting viable alternatives to the electorate.

Table 8 – Continuous predictor, BMM and MMR models

Dep. vars.		BMM			MMR		
		Estimate	L-95% CI	U-95% CI	Estimate	t value	p
Constraints	Intercept	0.51	0.4	0.61	0.54	10.4	0***
	Years Int.	0	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	-0.9	0.39
	Years leg.	-0.01	-0.02	0	-0.01	-2.4	0.01*
	GDPpc	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01	5.4	0***
	R ²	0.55			0.55		
Exec. needs conf.	Intercept	0.3	0.14	0.46	0.43	8.3	0***
	Years Int.	-0.01	-0.01	0	-0.01	-1.4	0.17
	Years leg.	0	-0.01	0.01	0	-0.5	0.59
	GDPpc	0	-0.01	0	0	-1.2	0.22
	R ²	0.65			0.65		
Ideological distance	Intercept	0.11	0.06	0.16	0.03	1.1	0.29
	Years Int.	0	0	0.01	0	-0.1	0.93
	Years leg.	0	-0.01	0	0	-0.4	0.65
	GDPpc	0.01	0	0.01	0.01	5.2	0***
	R ²	0.30			0.29		
Herfindahl gov.	Intercept	0.79	0.68	0.91	0.84	14.3	0***
	Years Int.	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02	3.8	0***
	Years leg.	0	-0.01	0.01	0	0.2	0.84
	GDPpc	0	-0.01	0.01	0	0.1	0.93
	R ²	0.39			0.39		
Herfindahl opp.	Intercept	0.51	0.42	0.61	0.48	8.2	0***
	Years Int.	-0.01	-0.02	0	-0.01	-1.2	0.21
	Years leg.	0.01	0	0.02	0.01	1.4	0.16
	GDPpc	0	-0.01	0	0	-0.8	0.41
	R ²	0.33			0.32		
N. obs.		574			574		

Author's elaboration. All standard deviation of the posteriors (BMM) are below 0.08. All standard errors (MMR) are below 0.06. Country fixed effects suppress due to length. Bayesian diagnostics in annex. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; • $p < 0.1$

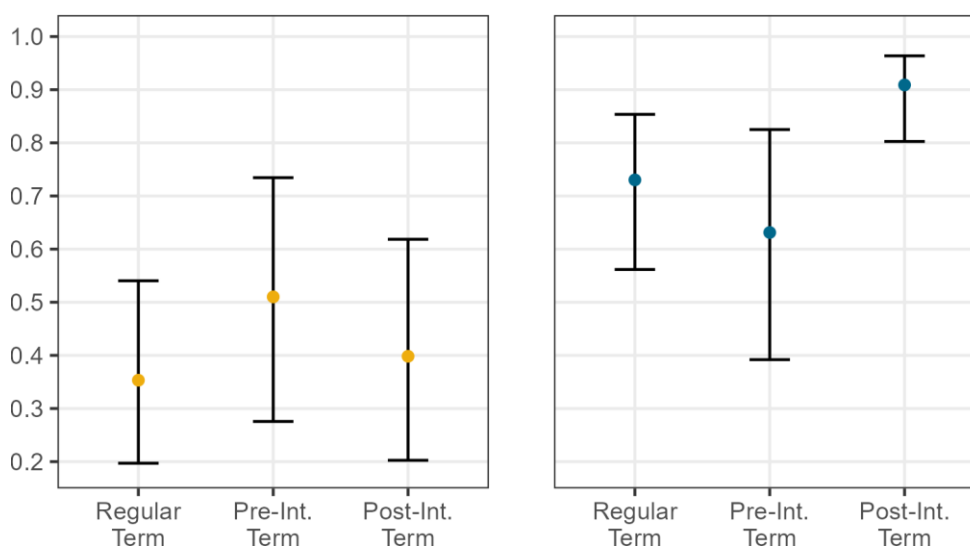
5.2 Block 2

5.2.1 Categorical predictors

5.2.1.1 Pre-interruption

Like in the distance between the government and the legislature variable, there is an escalation in political polarization between the government and the principal parties in the legislature during periods leading up to presidential interruptions. Specifically, there is a pre-removal spike in polarization estimated at 0.65, with a 95% Credible Interval (CI) ranging from -0.05 to 1.37. Although the credible interval narrowly includes zero, indicating a degree of statistical uncertainty, the magnitude of the effect is substantial and noteworthy. This result aligns with theoretical expectations that heightened polarization precedes interruptions as partisan tensions escalate and cooperation between branches deteriorates. The effect suggests that the ideological fracturing during this period is not merely incidental but may be a driving force behind the eventual interruption.

Figure 22 – Conditional effects for the categorical predictor, BMM



Author's elaboration.

The findings on the late government's unification level prior to removals, indicate a negative but non-significant correlation of -0.46 (95% CI: -1.19 to 0.25) compared to regular governance periods. Against the results of the Herfindahl Index, this would be an indication of a potential decline in internal cohesion within the government as an

interruption approaches, implying that fragmented governance contributes to the executive's vulnerability.

5.2.1.2 *Post-interruption*

Now, in the aftermath of presidential interruptions, polarization appears to diminish, almost returning to levels observed during regular governance periods. The effect size is less certain, with the credible interval including zero, suggesting that while there is a trend toward reduced polarization, it is not statistically conclusive. But, from the direction of the coefficient alone, this reduction supports in part the hypothesis that interruptions recalibrate political dynamics, creating conditions for cooperation or, at minimum, reduced antagonism between branches.

Table 9 – Categorical predictor, BMM

Dep. vars.		BMM Estimate	L-95% CI	U-95% CI
Polarization	Intercept	-0.83	-1.89	0.20
	Pre-int.	0.65	-0.05	1.37
	Post-int.	0.18	-0.41	0.77
	Years leg.	-0.1	-0.23	0.04
	GDPpc	0.06	-0.02	0.13
	R ²	0.25		
Unified Control	Intercept	-0.35	-1.42	0.75
	Pre-int.	-0.46	-1.19	0.25
	Post-int.	1.31	0.66	2
	Years leg.	0.03	-0.1	0.16
	GDPpc	0.15	0.07	0.23
	R ²	0.23		
N. obs.		606		

Author's elaboration. All standard deviation of the posteriors (BMM) are below 0.05. Bayesian diagnostics in annex.

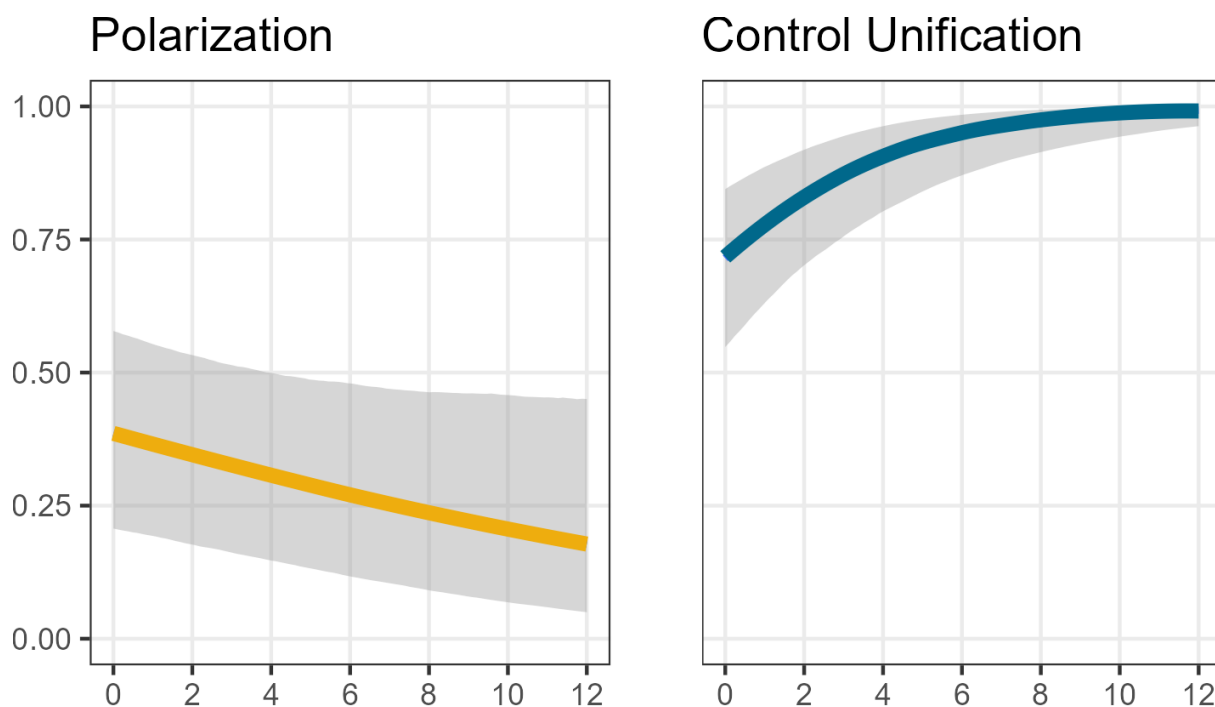
In terms of the new post-interruption government's unification, the results show a substantial increase, with an estimated effect of 1.31 (95% CI: 0.66 to 2). This finding strongly supports the argument that interruptions serve as mechanisms for political stabilization by consolidating power within a more cohesive governing coalition. The new government's heightened unification likely stems from deliberate efforts to solidify its legislative base, leveraging the outcomes of the interruption to minimize internal dissent.

Facing the task of restoring stability, coalition partners may align more closely on policy objectives and governance strategies.

5.2.2 Continuous predictors

The continuous predictor analysis reveals a modest decrease in polarization over time following a presidential interruption, with an estimated effect of -0.09 per year (95% CI: -0.19 to 0.01). Although the credible interval slightly includes zero, the trend suggests that ideological divides between the executive and legislature gradually narrow as the post-interruption government consolidates its position. This reduction may result from sustained coalition-building efforts and a deliberate focus on policy alignment to foster legislative support. However, the lack of strong statistical significance indicates that this process is neither uniform nor guaranteed.

Figure 23 – Conditional effects for the continuous predictor, BMM



Author's elaboration.

Government unification, by contrast, exhibits a clear and statistically significant increase over time post-interruption, with an estimated effect of 0.34 per year (95% CI: 0.2 to 0.5). This trend points at the long-term nature of coalition consolidation, where the new administration continues to strengthen its legislative alliances to enhance stability

and policymaking capacity. The consistent growth in unification may also reflect an adaptive response to the risks of interruption, where the government prioritizes internal cohesion as a safeguard against future challenges. This finding aligns with the assumption that post-interruption governments operate with heightened awareness of their precarious position, driving sustained efforts to maintain support within the legislature.

Table 10 – Continuous predictor, BMM

Dep. vars.		BMM		
		Estimate	L-95% CI	U-95% CI
Polarization	Intercept	-0.75	-1.9	0.34
	Years Int.	-0.09	-0.19	0.01
	Years leg.	-0.09	-0.23	0.05
	GDPpc	0.06	-0.01	0.13
	R ²	0.25		
Unified Control	Intercept	-0.24	0.54	-1.3
	Years Int.	0.34	0.2	0.5
	Years leg.	0.02	-0.11	0.15
	GDPpc	0.13	0.05	0.22
	R ²	0.24		
N. obs.		606		

Author's elaboration. All standard deviation of the posteriors (BMM) are below 0.05. Bayesian diagnostics in annex.

5.3 Block 3

In this block, I evaluate the distinction between real, observed interruptions and regular government changes, treated as synthetic removals. It is important to keep in mind that synthetic interruptions, by design, reclassify regular term observations into a distinct category that mimics the contextual conditions — as given by the matching covariates — of true interruptions. This reclassification introduces important modifications in the data frame that directly affect the distribution of observations across key factors, fundamentally altering the comparative structure of the new dataset in relation to the “vanilla” one.

The mutation in distributions occurs because synthetic interruptions effectively “borrow” from the pool of regular terms, taking with them their variation. For example, periods that could otherwise contribute to a consistent baseline for stable governance

(e.g., low legislative constraints or moderate ideological distances) are now treated as part of an interruption framework. This redistribution can skew or modify the central tendencies, variances, and relationships between variables, as the synthetic cases introduce new patterns that may not perfectly align with either true interruptions or regular terms.

These changes can result in differences between models with and without synthetic interruptions, as the underlying patterns in the data differ. However, this does not imply that one approach is better or worse; rather, it stresses how methodological choices can affect the conclusions of a study. In this spirit, the results below should be interpreted with due caution. Tables associated with this block can be found in the Annex.

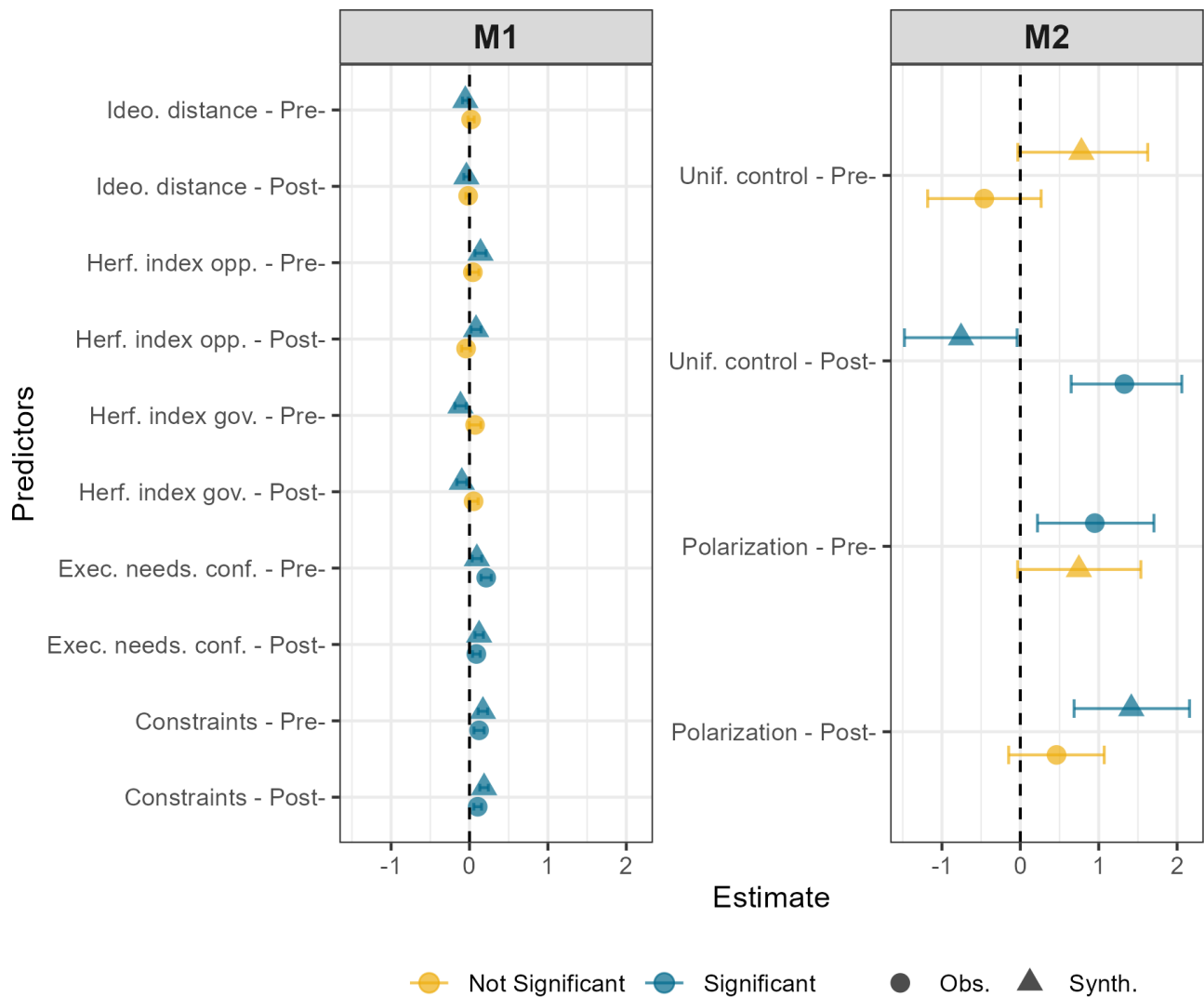
5.3.1 *Categorical predictors*

Figure 24 plots the results of the categorical predictor model. For constraints, both synthetic and observed interruptions show consistent increases pre- and post-interruption, with effects ranging from 0.10 to 0.19 (e.g., true post-removals: 0.10, 95% CI: 0.06 to 0.15; synthetic-post: 0.19, 95% CI: 0.13 to 0.24). Similarly, executive dependency on legislative confidence significantly rises in both pre- and post-interruption periods, with the strongest effect observed in observed pre-breakdown cases (0.21, 95% CI: 0.15 to 0.28).

As for ideological distance, synthetic cases display reductions pre- and post-interruption (e.g., post: -0.04, 95% CI: -0.07 to -0.01), reflecting better alignment, while observed cases show no clear trends. For polarization, significant increases occur pre- and post-removals, particularly in synthetic cases (post: 1.42, 95% CI: 0.69 to 2.16), with a moderate rise in true pre-interruption cases (0.95, 95% CI: 0.22 to 1.70).

Government concentration (Herfindahl Index) decreases in synthetic interruptions (e.g., post: -0.10, 95% CI: -0.16 to -0.03), but no significant changes are seen for real presidential falls. In contrast, opposition concentration increases in synthetic cases pre- and post-interruption (e.g., post: 0.08, 95% CI: 0.02 to 0.15), while remaining relatively stable for true interruptions. Finally, control unification diverges sharply between synthetic and observed cases: true interruptions show a strong post-interruption increase (1.33, 95% CI: 0.65 to 2.06), whereas synthetic cases decline post-interruption (-0.76, 95% CI: -1.48 to -0.04).

Figure 24 – observed vs. synthetic interruptions, categorical predictors

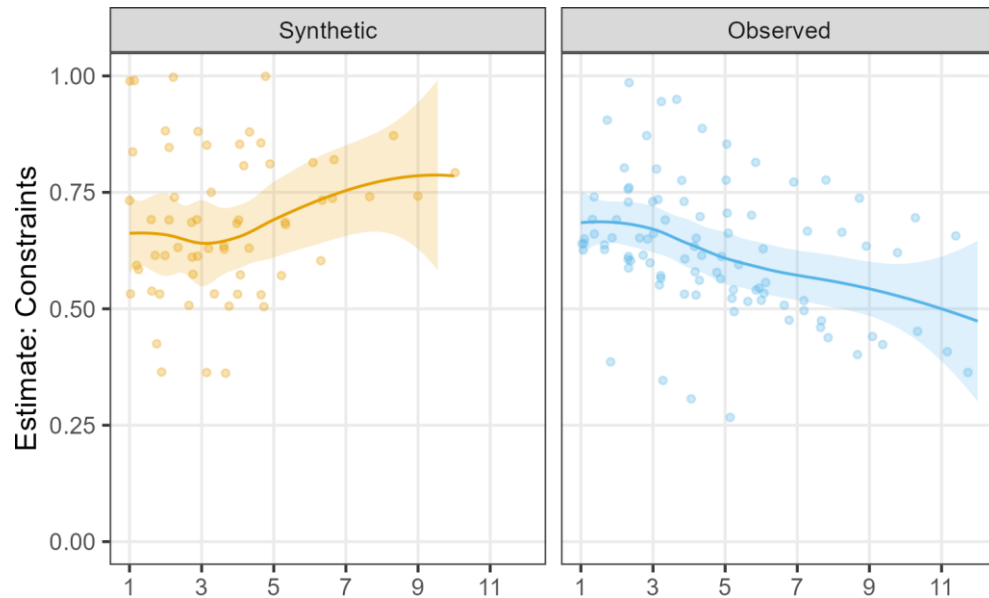


Author's elaboration.

5.3.2 Continuous predictors

Figure 25 depicts the conditional effects (posterior predictions) for constraints in each post-interruption time point and group (synthetic and observed removals), derived from the BMM model. The results reveal contrasting dynamics in legislative constraints following synthetic and observed interruptions. For the synthetic ones, constraints remain stable, showing a slight upward trend over time. In contrast, observed interruptions exhibit a consistent decline in constraints, aligned with the interaction estimate of -0.03 (95% CI: -0.07 to 0.00). This downward trend highlights a recalibration of legislative oversight post-presidential removal.

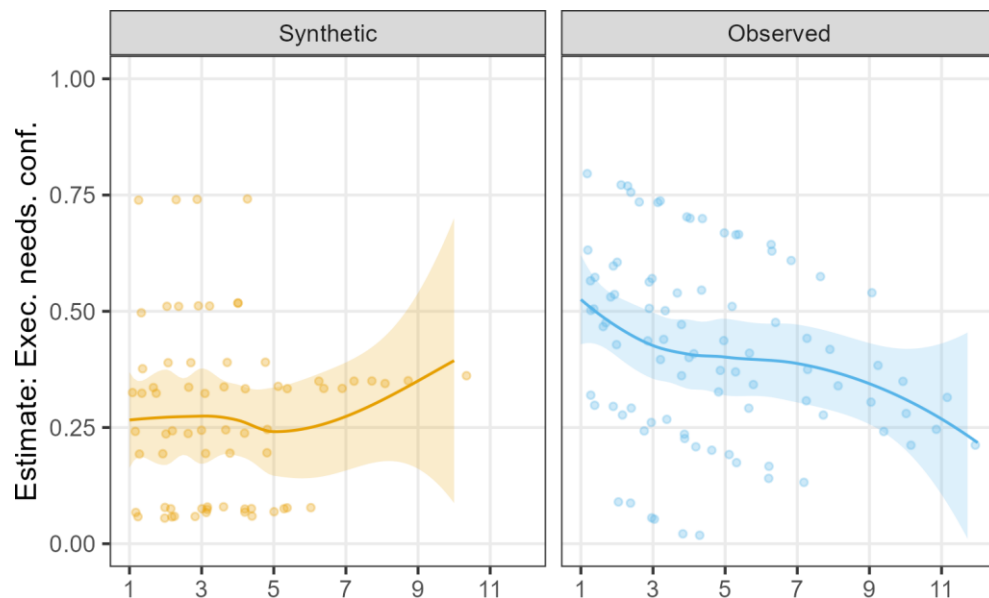
Figure 25 – observed vs. synthetic interruptions: constraints



Author's elaboration.

As for executive dependency on legislative confidence displayed in Figure 26, for synthetic interruptions, the values present a slight increase over time, although not statistically significant. In observed interruptions, however, a marked downward trend can be seen, reflecting decreasing executive reliance as time progresses, consistent with the interaction estimate of -0.06 (95% CI: -0.10 to -0.02).

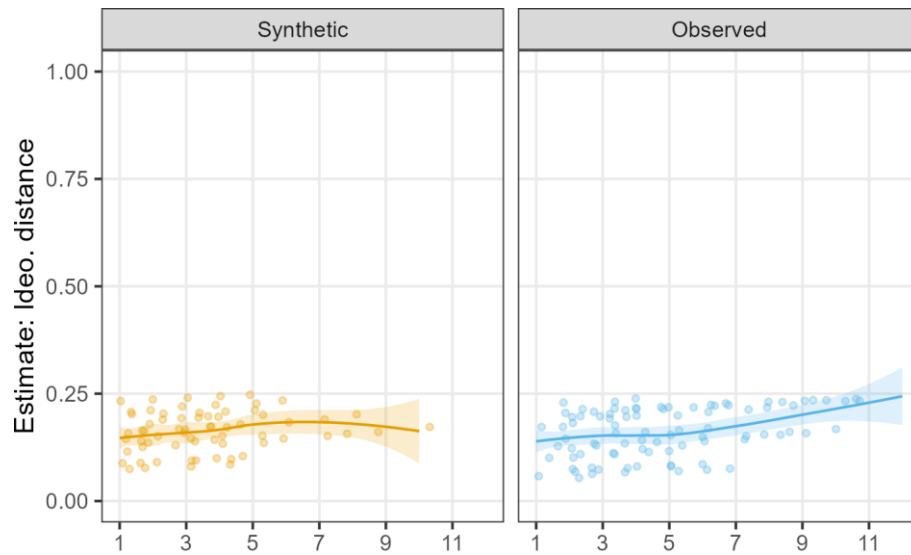
Figure 26 – observed vs. synthetic interruptions: exec. needs conf



Author's elaboration.

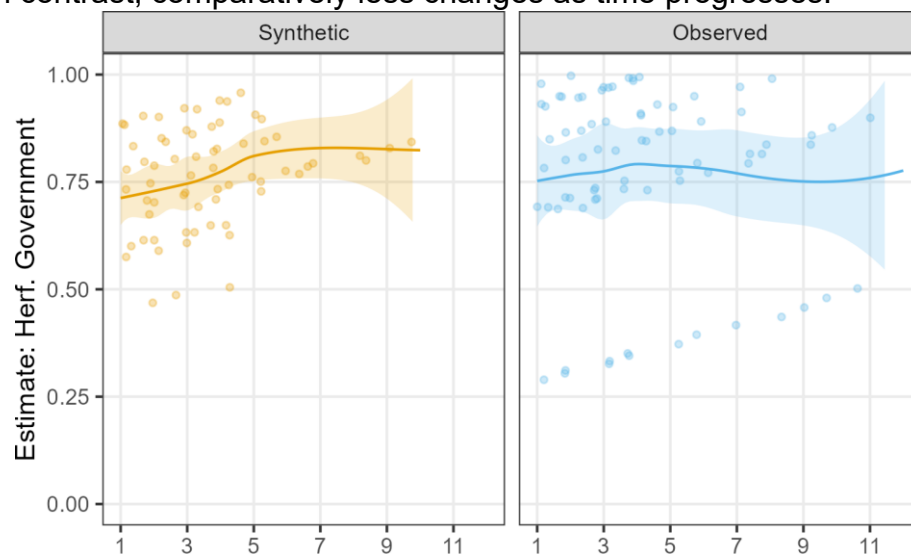
The trends for ideological distance in Figure 27 illustrate a small divergence between synthetic and observed interruptions. In the regular executive change unrelated to interruptions, ideological distance remains somewhat flat. Conversely, in observed removals, the plot demonstrates a gentle, gradual upward trend in ideological distance, reflecting a modest but persistent increase over time.

Figure 27 – observed vs. synthetic interruptions: ideo. distance



Author's elaboration.

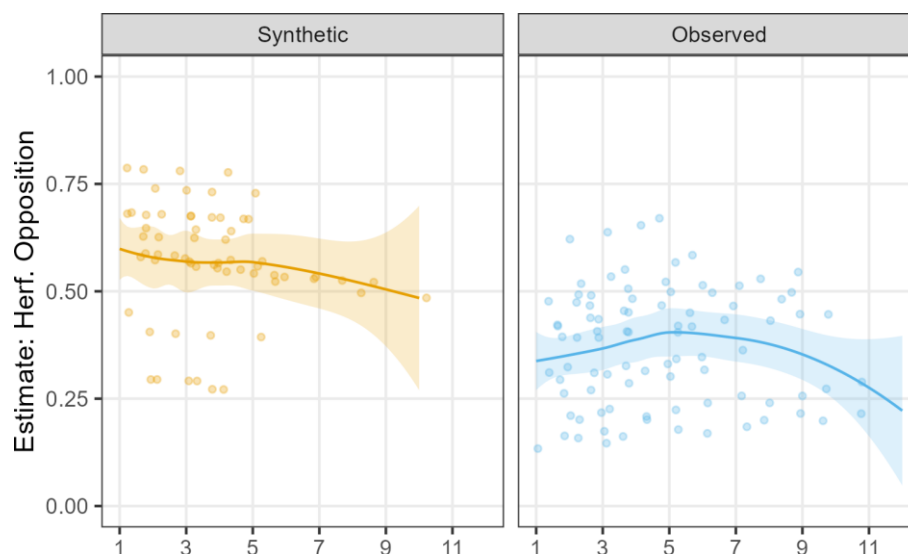
Figure 28 shows the impacts on the Herfindahl Index for the government. In the synthetic cases, the index shows a gradual increase as the term ages, indicating rising government concentration. In contrast, real interruptions exhibit a flatter trajectory, signaling, in contrast, comparatively less changes as time progresses.



Author's elaboration.

The Herfindahl Index for the opposition, in Figure 29, experiences a declining trend in synthetic interruptions, with the opposition cohesion decreasing over time post-new government. For observed falls, the pattern is more complex. Initially, opposition cohesion appears to increase, peaking around the mid-point of the timeline, before declining toward the later years. The interaction term (-0.00, 95% CI: -0.04 to 0.04) suggests no substantial statistical deviation from the baseline trend. Together, these patterns highlight contrasting dynamics: synthetic interruptions show a smoother and steady decline in opposition concentration, while observed interruptions suggest a more fluctuating and, maybe, context-dependent trajectory.

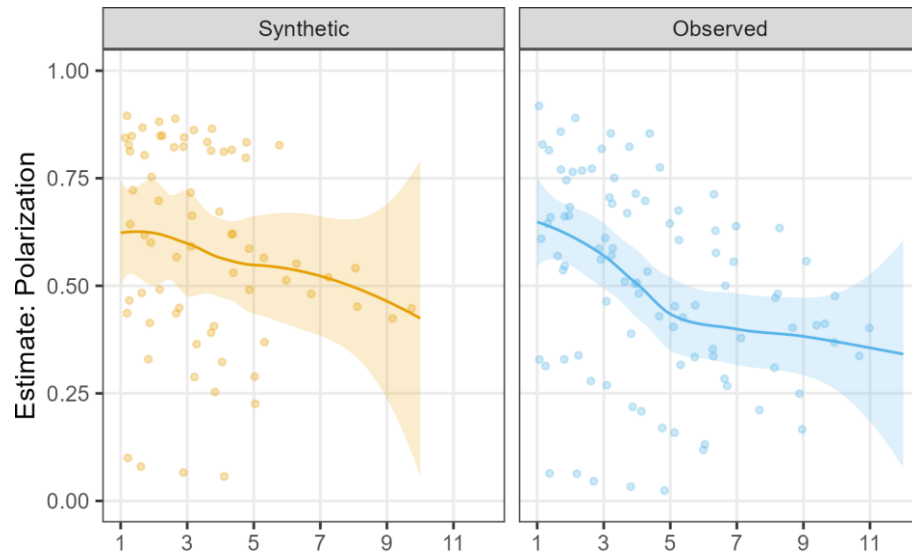
Figure 29 – observed vs. synthetic interruptions: Herf. opp.



Author's elaboration.

The polarization estimates in Figure 30 presents a similar decline over time in both synthetic and observed interruptions. For the synthetic post-removal periods, the descent appears relatively steady and smooth, with the interaction term (-0.02, 95% CI: -0.08 to 0.04) reflecting no significant deviation. The confidence intervals widen toward later years, indicating increasing uncertainty as fewer observations are available. For the true post-interruption terms, polarization follows an elbow-shape, declining more sharply during the initial years before leveling off. The interaction term (-0.12, 95% CI: -0.62 to 0.49) suggests a potentially sharper early decline, although with a substantial gap in the confidence intervals.

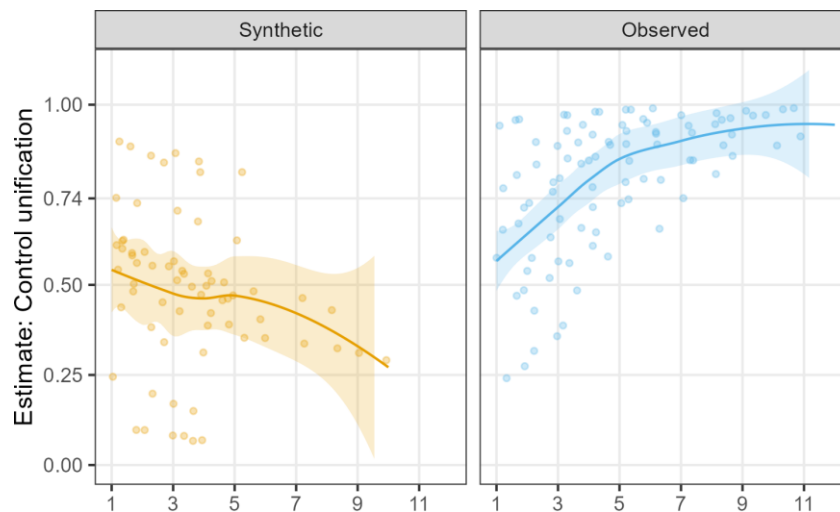
Figure 30 – observed vs. synthetic interruptions: polarization



Author's elaboration.

Last but not least, the control unification trends reveal stark contrasts between synthetic and observed interruptions. In the normal post-election terms, the estimates show a steady decline over time, suggests increasing fragmentation comparatively. The observed interruptions, conversely, exhibit a strong upward trend, with control unification rising sharply in the early years and plateauing thereafter. The interaction term (0.29, 95% CI: -0.26 to 0.84) reflects a tendency toward consolidation, although with dubious confidence intervals.

Figure 31 – observed vs. synthetic interruptions: control unification



Author's elaboration.

The comparison between real interruptions and synthetic removals demonstrates critical differences in the political trajectories of the two groups. Observed interruptions consistently reveal heightened legislative constraints and increased executive dependency on legislative confidence, both before and after the interruption. These findings reflect a significant recalibration of inter-branch dynamics, where heightened legislative oversight and executive coalition-building emerge as essential survival strategies. Post-interruption, observed cases also exhibit a marked unification of government control, signaling deliberate efforts by incoming administrations to stabilize governance and consolidate power. These patterns align with theoretical expectations of post-crisis realignments, highlighting the stabilizing role of real interruptions in rebalancing power and fostering cohesion.

Conversely, synthetic interruptions follow a different trajectory, characterized by significant increases in polarization and opposition concentration, particularly post-interruption. These trends suggest a scenario more reflective of routine ideological and partisan fragmentation, typical of regular electoral cycles, rather than the acute, crisis-driven recalibrations seen in real interruptions. Furthermore, synthetic interruptions are marked by declining government concentration, a stark contrast to the consolidation efforts observed in real-world cases, reinforcing their fundamentally different political dynamics.

Together, these findings reveal that while both observed and synthetic interruptions involve strategic recalibrations, their outcomes diverge in meaningful ways. Real interruptions catalyze a cohesive reconfiguration of power dynamics, driven by induced realignments and stabilization efforts. In contrast, regular, post-electoral terms, grouped as synthetic interruptions, reflect the more fragmented and diffuse adjustments of regular governance cycles, lacking the robust mechanisms for institutional recalibration that characterize true removals.

5.4 Finding an ace to keep

The results presented here provide some insights into the consequences of presidential interruptions on the political landscape in Latin America, specifically regarding executive-legislative relations and the dynamics of governmental and oppositional

cohesion. It examines how removals affect legislative constraints, executive dependency, ideological distances, different measures of ideological polarization and power concentration.

The findings support the hypothesis that presidential interruptions catalyze a reconfiguration of the political landscape, leading to increased government concentration and legislative cohesion, also aligning with the literature that suggests interruptions are not merely disruptive events but serve as strategic tools within the political arsenal of elites (e.g. Helmke, 2007; De Micheli & Sanchez-Gomez, 2022). The strategic behavior of political actors, as modeled in the game-theoretic framework, anticipates that interruptions are used to recalibrate power dynamics and achieve desired policy outcomes, rather than being solely reactions to executive misconduct.

5.4.1 Every hand's a winner: Pre-interruption insights

A significant increase in legislative constraints on the executive during pre-interruption periods was observed, indicating a shift in the balance of power towards the legislature and suggesting that as tensions escalate, lawmakers become more assertive in checking the executive's power. This supports the notion that interruptions are preceded by strategic positioning from legislative actors who seek to maximize their influence over the policy agenda (Pérez-Liñán, 2007; Llanos & Marsteintredet, 2021). By intensifying oversight and amplifying checks on executive power, legislatures strategically position themselves as arbiters in the struggle for control, reflecting Helmke's (2017) argument that inter-branch clashes are products of deliberate strategic calculations. The observed increase in legislative constraints signals a recalibration of inter-branch power that appears to be a precursor to interruptions, as legislative actors capitalize on executive instability to enhance their leverage.

Similarly, the heightened executive dependency on legislative confidence during the pre-interruption period further stresses the precarious position of the incumbent government. The executive is compelled to engage in intensified bargaining and possibly make concessions to maintain support, reflecting a shift towards a more parliamentary-like reliance on legislative backing (Llanos & Nolte, 2016). This dynamic is consistent with the game-theoretic model's prediction that incumbents facing the risk of interruption must

choose between appeasement and defiance, with significant implications for their survival, also aligning with the findings of Gayosso & Escamilla Cadena (2017) and De Micheli & Sanchez-Gomez (2022), who highlight the fragility of coalitional politics in Latin America: presidents under threat of interruption often resort to extensive negotiations and concessions, a dynamic that reinforces the legislature's centrality in the power equation. The observed pattern emphasizes the strategic behavior of political elites, who steer these high-stakes interactions with an acute awareness of the shifting balance of power.

The increased polarization and moderate ideological divide between the executive and the legislature during pre-interruption periods, hints at growing ideological divergence that could exacerbate conflicts, creating fertile ground for opposition challenges. However, the more pronounced increase in government concentration, as indicated by the Herfindahl Index, suggests that incumbents respond to these defiance by consolidating their coalitions. This strengthening may serve as a defensive mechanism to preserve executive stability (Pérez-Liñán, 2007; Helmke, 2017; De Micheli & Sanchez-Gomez, 2022) — a Hail Mary to deter opposition efforts, albeit with dubious effects.

Interestingly, the opposition's concentration does not show a significant increase during the pre-interruption period. This could reflect the inherent challenges in unifying diverse discontent factions — particularly in fragmented political systems where ideological and strategic differences often prevail —, or may indicate that the opposition relies more on exploiting the incumbent's vulnerabilities as a way to signal its proactivity to the electorate rather than on internal cohesion (Llanos & Pérez-Liñán, 2021). This lack of significant consolidation aligns with the game-theoretic model's assumption that the challengers' decision to engage depends on the anticipated support from the legislature and the costs involved.

This disarray contributes to a volatile political landscape, where both the government and its challengers engage in strategic maneuvers with uneven outcomes. Unlike the government, which can centralize its efforts under the presidency, the opposition, more often than not, lacks a singular unifying authority, relying instead on ad hoc alliances that struggle to maintain focus and coherence.

In this fragmented state, challengers often turn to external crises — real or fabricated — as tactical leverage against the government. Protests, scandals, and public dissatisfaction serve as potent symbols of executive failure, creating a narrative of instability that the opposition can exploit to diminish the costs associated with removal proceedings and bolster its legitimacy to the electorate, proclaiming itself as the hero the nation deserves — but never the one it needs. These turmoil act as pressure points, not only rallying public sentiment but also influencing legislators who are weighing the costs and benefits of supporting a challenge. The best strategy for fragmented challengers is to capitalize on these external pressures in order to offset their lack of internal unity, using the broader climate of unrest to shift the legislative calculus in its favor.

Not surprisingly, when factors such as elite preferences, including democratic commitment or ideological radicalization, are considered, the influence of external crises diminishes, while the importance of institutional elements rise (Marisguia, 2021), revealing the importance of elite negotiations and legislative backing in the removal process. Therefore, the decisive factor for presidential interruptions appears to be elite negotiations within the legislature.

5.4.2 Every hand's a loser: Post-Interruption learnings

Following a presidential interruption, the findings reveal a recalibration of political dynamics, marked by shifts toward greater government unification and legislative cohesion. Legislative constraints remain elevated compared to regular terms but show a slight decrease from the pre-interruption peak. This sustained level of oversight suggests that while the immediate crisis may have been resolved, the legislature remains vigilant, possibly to prevent a recurrence of the factors that led to the interruption (Marsteintredet, 2014). This persistent post-interruption vigilance, relative to regular terms, likely reflects the legislature's strategic desire to prevent a recurrence of executive overreach, reinforcing its role as a check on presidential power.

The decrease in executive dependency on legislative confidence post-interruption, although still higher than during regular terms, indicates a gradual normalization of executive autonomy and inter-branch relations. The new government appears to balance asserting control with acknowledging the legislature's role, reflecting a strategic approach

to governance that aims to avoid the pitfalls of its predecessor by balancing cooperation over confrontation.

Alongside the diminishing polarization as post-interruption years progress, this aligns with the idea that interruptions foster a realignment of political actors around shared policy objectives, closing the gap between executive and legislative preferences to ensure stability, agenda-setting efficiency and advancement (Alemán & Tsebelis, 2016). Once more, this finding supports the hypothesis that interruptions catalyze a stabilization process, where the immediate need for legislative cooperation diminishes over time as governments consolidate their positions. However, the elevated baseline of dependency compared to regular terms indicates that post-interruption governments remain sensitive to legislative dynamics.

A powerful finding is the significant increase in government concentration post-interruption, further corroborating the strategic efforts of new administrations to compound power. By consolidating their legislative base, post-interruption governments reduce the risk of renewed instability, enabling them to navigate the challenges of the transition period more effectively. The sustained increase over time suggests a deliberate effort to maintain this unity as a means of stabilizing governance (Mustapic, 2010), being consistent with the theoretical expectation that interruptions prompt elites to enhance their agenda-setting power by forming more cohesive and unified coalitions, which is an essential feature in fragmented systems (Marsteintredet, Llanos, & Nolte 2013; De Micheli & Sanchez-Gomez, 2022).

Conversely, the opposition's concentration decreases significantly post-interruption, indicating increased fragmentation. This fragmentation may result from the disarray and loss of momentum following the removal of the incumbent, regardless if: 1) the opposition had been unified primarily in hostility to the previous government rather than by a cohesive policy agenda; or 2) the opposition is now composed of the former, recently removed government, and finds itself struggling to present a unified front after suffering severe losses.

This highlights the dual nature of political interruptions as both challenges and catalysts within governance systems. These events, rather than dismantling existing

structures, recalibrate them by addressing systemic dysfunctions and fostering realignment among political actors. This realignment bridges divides, promotes legislative cohesion, and supports the formation of unified governing coalitions, ultimately prioritizing stability and adaptability in governance.

In this sense, removals emerge as transformative moments, redefining power dynamics and governance strategies. While governments respond by emphasizing coalition-building and legislative alignment, fragmented oppositions face challenges in mounting effective resistance.

But these assertions also require a more cautious analysis due to statistical uncertainties in some estimates, pointing to the need for further research. Overall, interruptions are portrayed as pivotal opportunities for political renewal, simultaneously reflecting governance challenges and offering pathways to more cohesive and resilient systems, particularly within the context of Latin America.

6 WHEN THE DEALING'S DONE: DISRUPTIONS, RECALIBRATIONS, AND DEMOCRATIC ADAPTABILITY

Presidential interruptions in Latin America have proven to be an emblematic phenomena. Historically framed as indicators of democratic instability, these events have often been dismissed as mere reactions to executive misconduct or unforeseen crises. I beg to differ. Through this dissertation, I posit that presidential interruptions, while initially disruptive, act as recalibration mechanisms that foster government concentration and legislative cohesion, ultimately stabilizing governance in the region. Through a combination of game-theoretic modeling and empirical analysis, this study uncovers the dual nature of removals as both reflections of democratic power struggles and testaments to the adaptability of the region's institutions.

The central research question — how do presidential interruptions affect the political landscape in which the government and legislature operate? — guided this inquiry, leading to a systematic exploration of removals and shedding light on how these episodes reshape power dynamics and coalitional politics.

Preceding an interruption, the political landscape becomes a theater for high-stakes strategic maneuvering. Legislative constraints on the executive increase significantly, signaling a power shift toward the legislature. This heightened oversight reflects a legislature that is not merely reactive but strategically assertive, seeking to curtail executive overreach and maximize its leverage. Empirical results corroborate this, showing a consistent rise in legislative constraints and executive dependency on legislative confidence during pre-interruption periods. These dynamics align with theoretical frameworks, such as those of Helmke (2017) and Llanos & Pérez-Liñan (2021), which portray inter-branch conflicts as calculated moves within broader power struggles and virtue signaling.

Amid rising tensions, polarization between the executive and legislature escalates, deepening ideological divides, complicating cooperation and reinforcing the fractured nature of pre-interruption governance. At the same time, incumbent governments consolidate their coalitions in the hopes of projecting stability and deter challenges, highlighting the zero-sum nature of pre-interruption dynamics. In this scenario, opposition

concentration shows limited change, reflecting the challenges of unifying disparate factions. The result is a chaotic environment where both sides engage in strategic positioning but with varying degrees of success.

The opposition in disarray sets the stage for the legislature as a whole to emerge as the main arbiter of power. Unlike the executive, which consolidates its allies to perhaps survive the immediate threat of removal, the challengers face a unique set of obstacles that hinder their ability to present a unified front. The opposition's primary goal — replacing the incumbent — requires navigating the legislative dynamics as a pivotal factor, given the majority needed to determine the outcome of any interruption. This dependence on legislative alignment complicates the opposition's strategic calculus, as their success hinges not only on their own cohesion but also on securing the support of their peers.

Given these hindrances, the best option for the opposition is to capitalize on the contextual turmoil of the pre-interruption environment to amplify its leverage. Protests and scandals, though not sufficient causes of interruptions on their own, provide fertile ground for challengers to exploit social tensions and discontent. As these external pressures grow, they intensify the perception of executive vulnerability, which the opposition uses to galvanize legislative support. Research demonstrates that while protests and scandals appear to have a strong impact on the likelihood of removals, their influence wanes when variables concerning elite preferences, such as commitment to democratic norms or radicalization, are factored in (Marisguia 2021). Instead, the significance of securing a legislative majority becomes more pronounced, underscoring the centrality of elite interactions and the backing of the legislature in the interruption process (Aversa 2016; Helmke 2017; Serrafero 2014).

The game-theoretic model highlights this dynamic by positioning the legislature as the decisive actor in interruption scenarios. On the one hand, challengers face inherent difficulties in unifying under a coherent strategy because their coalition often consists of ideologically diverse or pragmatically divergent actors, whose only shared goal is to remove the president. This common objective can be more of a curse than a blessing, as opposition actors frequently use impeachment resolutions and other legislative mechanisms as symbolic gestures to appeal to their constituencies (Llanos & Pérez-

Liñán, 2021) or differentiate themselves from rival factions, further exacerbating fragmentation and diluting collective strength as they compete for attention and public legitimacy. On the other hand, the incumbent has the centralized authority of the presidency to rally possible allies and distribute perks.

In this context, where the lawmakers' preferences are shaped by both ideological alignment and strategic interests, the legislature is the decisive player. Legislators weigh the benefits of aligning with the opposition against the potential costs of supporting a challenge. When the ideological distance between the legislature and the government is greater than that between the legislature and the opposition, legislative support for removal becomes more likely.

Post-interruption, the legislature's continued influence helps explain the persistent fragmentation of the opposition. Following a removal, the former government and its allies often transition to a resistance role, creating a new and naturally fractured coalition. These actors, previously aligned under the executive's centralized leadership, now face the challenge of redefining their roles in a decentralized and competitive opposition landscape. At the same time, the new government prioritizes coalition-building and alignment with the legislature, further marginalizing those not willing to compromise. This dynamic, in which the legislature's strategic decisions shape both pre- and post-interruption periods, supports the notion that Congress has become as significant a power arbiter in Latin America as the executive — and, in some contexts, even more so.

This trend is further reinforced by other empirical observations. Regardless of who occupies the executive chair — whether an ally of the former opposition or an entirely different actor — legislative constraints and the executive's need for confidence, though somewhat relaxed compared to pre-interruption peaks, remain elevated, reflecting heightened oversight. The gradual normalization observed suggests that new governments strike a delicate balance between asserting autonomy and maintaining legislative goodwill.

But the most statistically impactful post-interruption shift lies in the sharp increase in government concentration. New administrations prioritize internal cohesion, consolidating their legislative base to secure stability and navigate the challenges of their

precarious position. The sustained increase in government concentration underscores the deliberate efforts of post-interruption governments to strengthen their legislative alliances and avoid the pitfalls of their predecessors.

Conversely, opposition concentration declines significantly post-interruption, highlighting the disarray within former governing coalitions transitioning into opposition roles. This fragmentation reflects the dual nature of oustings as both stabilizers for some and disruptors for others — as in any political event of similar magnitude.

Polarization, while initially reduced post-interruption, remains an enduring challenge. The empirical findings suggest that while new governments make deliberate efforts to align ideologically with the legislature, broader polarization metrics remain elevated.

All in all, the game-theoretic framework presented in this dissertation provides a structured lens through which to interpret the exposed, empirical dynamics. By modeling the strategic interactions between the incumbent government, opposition, and legislature, the schema reveals how political actors traverse the risks and opportunities associated with toppling a president.

The findings confirm the model's hypothesis: interruptions are not random systemic crises and disruptions, but outcomes of calculated decisions driven by ideological alignment, policy costs, and coalition dynamics, fueled by high expectations and filled to the brim with programmatic beliefs. To treat them as the ugly child of Latin America's presidentialism is to disregard a highly sophisticated political strategy that, more often than not, only comes to fruition through quasi-institutional means or "creative" interpretations of the law.

Presidential interruptions, as this study reveals, are transformative events that recalibrate power dynamics in the region. They respond to incumbents' massive, irreversible loss of support and political capital by creating conditions for change — whether by keeping the executive on high alert, open to dialogue and compromise; or by reshuffling it entirely.

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Annex A – Block 1

A.1 Categorical predictor, BMM model

Table A1 – Multilevel Hyperparameters: ~country (Number of levels: 17)

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
SD (Constraints Intercept)	0.18	0.04	0.12	0.26	1	3003	4710
SD (Exec. needs. conf. Intercept)	0.28	0.05	0.2	0.41	1	2720	3761
SD (Ideo. dist. Intercept)	0.08	0.02	0.05	0.12	1	2775	4450
SD (Herf. gov Intercept)	0.19	0.04	0.13	0.29	1	2890	4388
SD (Herf. opp Intercept)	0.16	0.03	0.11	0.23	1	2681	4132

Author's elaboration. Draws: 4 chains, each with iter = 4000; warmup = 2000; thin = 1; total post-warmup draws = 8000.

Table A2 – Regression coefficients

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints Intercept	0.49	0.05	0.39	0.59	1	2889	4578
Exec. needs. conf. Intercept	0.27	0.08	0.13	0.42	1	2239	3596
Ideo. dist. Intercept	0.11	0.03	0.06	0.16	1	4225	5499
Herf. gov Intercept	0.78	0.06	0.67	0.9	1	2976	4241
Herf. opp Intercept	0.52	0.05	0.42	0.62	1	3951	5628
Constraints Pre-Interruption	0.07	0.03	0	0.14	1	8227	6265
Constraints Post-Interruption	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.11	1	8218	6029
Constraints New Legislation	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0	1	10184	6007

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints GDP per Capita	0.02	0	0.01	0.02	1	7478	6521
Exec. needs. conf. Pre-Interruption	0.18	0.03	0.12	0.25	1	9510	7029
Exec. needs. conf. Post-Interruption	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.1	1	9010	6250
Exec. needs. conf. New Legislation	0	0.01	-0.01	0.01	1	9608	6455
Exec. needs. conf. GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0	1	9767	7028
Ideo. dist. Pre-Interruption	0.03	0.02	-0.01	0.07	1	10185	6777
Ideo. dist. Post-Interruption	-0.01	0.01	-0.03	0.02	1	9487	6404
Ideo. dist. New Legislation	0	0	-0.01	0	1	13162	6416
Ideo. dist. GDP per Capita	0.01	0	0	0.01	1	8067	6461
Herf. gov Pre-Interruption	0.1	0.04	0.02	0.18	1	10548	6608
Herf. gov Post-Interruption	0.08	0.03	0.03	0.14	1	9527	6670
Herf. gov New Legislation	0	0.01	-0.01	0.01	1	12806	6024
Herf. gov GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0.01	1	9267	6592
Herf. opp Pre-Interruption	0.01	0.04	-0.06	0.09	1	11833	6355
Herf. opp Post-Interruption	-0.07	0.03	-0.13	-0.02	1	10668	6685
Herf. opp New Legislation	0.01	0.01	0	0.02	1	13120	5653
Herf. opp GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0	1	8424	6047

Author's elaboration.

Table A3 – Further distributional parameters

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Sigma (Constraints)	0.19	0.01	0.18	0.2	1	9978	6427
Sigma (Exec. needs. conf.)	0.18	0.01	0.17	0.19	1	10676	6382
Sigma (Ideo. dist.)	0.11	0	0.1	0.12	1	11558	6297
Sigma (Herf. gov)	0.21	0.01	0.2	0.23	1	11842	6453
Sigma (Herf. opp)	0.21	0.01	0.2	0.22	1	11318	5892

Author's elaboration.

Table A4 – Residual Correlations

Residual Correlation	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints & Exec. needs. conf.	0.59	0.03	0.53	0.64	1	9198	6063
Constraints & Ideo. dist.	-0.25	0.04	-0.32	-0.17	1	11193	6348
Exec. needs. conf. & Ideo. dist.	0.01	0.04	-0.07	0.09	1	10555	5927
Constraints & Herf. gov	-0.15	0.04	-0.23	-0.07	1	11347	6263
Exec. needs. conf. & Herf. gov	-0.04	0.04	-0.12	0.04	1	11714	6183
Ideo. dist. & Herf. gov	0.25	0.04	0.17	0.32	1	10682	6240
Constraints & Herf. opp	-0.11	0.04	-0.19	-0.02	1	11171	5872
Exec. needs. conf. & Herf. opp	0.01	0.04	-0.07	0.09	1	10702	6091
Ideo. dist. & Herf. opp	-0.14	0.04	-0.23	-0.06	1	11322	5438
Herf. gov & Herf. opp	0.06	0.04	-0.03	0.14	1	10772	5589

Author's elaboration.

A.2 Continuous predictor, BMM model

Table A5 – Multilevel Hyperparameters: ~country (Number of levels: 17)

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
SD (Constraints Intercept)	0.17	0.04	0.12	0.26	1	3098	4294
SD (Exec. needs. conf. Intercept)	0.29	0.06	0.2	0.43	1	2878	4537
SD (Ideo. dist. Intercept)	0.08	0.02	0.05	0.12	1	3090	4513
SD (Herf. gov Intercept)	0.2	0.04	0.14	0.29	1	3176	4851
SD (Herf. opp Intercept)	0.16	0.03	0.11	0.24	1	2693	4410

Author's elaboration. Draws: 4 chains, each with iter = 4000; warmup = 2000; thin = 1; total post-warmup draws = 8000.

Table A6 – Regression Coefficients

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints Intercept	0.51	0.05	0.4	0.61	1	3198	4179
Exec. needs. conf. Intercept	0.3	0.08	0.14	0.46	1	2380	3602
Ideo. dist. Intercept	0.11	0.03	0.06	0.16	1	4668	5799
Herf. gov Intercept	0.79	0.06	0.68	0.91	1	3649	4582
Herf. opp Intercept	0.51	0.05	0.42	0.61	1	4053	5345
Constraints Interruption	0	0	-0.01	0.01	1	9350	6122
Constraints New Legislation	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0	1	10008	5858
Constraints GDP per Capita	0.02	0	0.01	0.02	1	8493	6431

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	I-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Exec. needs. conf. Interruption	-0.01	0	-0.01	0	1	11327	6109
Exec. needs. conf. New Legislation	0	0.01	-0.01	0.01	1	10594	6687
Exec. needs. conf. GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0	1	10083	6740
Ideo. dist. Interruption	0	0	0	0.01	1	11339	6256
Ideo. dist. New Legislation	0	0	-0.01	0	1	12041	6480
Ideo. dist. GDP per Capita	0.01	0	0	0.01	1	9508	6208
Herf. gov Interruption	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.03	1	11946	6356
Herf. gov New Legislation	0	0.01	-0.01	0.01	1	11388	5577
Herf. gov GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0.01	1	9642	6457
Herf. opp Interruption	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0	1	11467	5940
Herf. opp New Legislation	0.01	0.01	0	0.02	1	11683	5268
Herf. opp GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0	1	8120	5828

Author's elaboration.

Table A7 – Further distributional parameters

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	I-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Sigma (Constraints)	0.19	0.01	0.18	0.2	1	9494	6399
Sigma (Exec. needs. conf.)	0.19	0.01	0.18	0.2	1	10453	6303
Sigma (Ideo. dist.)	0.11	0	0.1	0.12	1	10563	6231

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Sigma (Herf. gov)	0.21	0.01	0.2	0.23	1	10880	5764
Sigma (Herf. opp)	0.21	0.01	0.2	0.22	1	11171	5440

Author's elaboration.

Table A8 – Residual Correlations

Residual Correlation	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints & Exec. needs. conf.	0.59	0.03	0.53	0.64	1	10230	6583
Constraints & Ideo. dist.	-0.24	0.04	-0.32	-0.16	1	10250	6395
Exec. needs. conf. & Ideo. dist.	0.02	0.04	-0.06	0.11	1	10734	6572
Constraints & Herf. gov	-0.13	0.04	-0.21	-0.05	1	11439	5748
Exec. needs. conf. & Herf. gov	0	0.04	-0.08	0.08	1	11477	5441
Ideo. dist. & Herf. gov	0.25	0.04	0.17	0.33	1	10714	5807
Constraints & Herf. opp	-0.11	0.04	-0.19	-0.03	1	10702	5801
Exec. needs. conf. & Herf. opp	0.01	0.04	-0.08	0.09	1	11184	5602
Ideo. dist. & Herf. opp	-0.14	0.04	-0.22	-0.06	1	11309	5704
Herf. gov & Herf. opp	0.06	0.04	-0.02	0.14	1	10756	5612

Author's elaboration.

Annex B – Block 2

B.1 Categorical predictor, BMM model

Table B1 – Multilevel Hyperparameters: ~country (Number of levels: 17)

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
SD (Polarization Intercept)	1.56	0.38	0.98	2.47	1	2261	3701
SD (Unified Control Intercept)	1.39	0.34	0.88	2.19	1	2056	3544

Author's elaboration. Draws: 4 chains, each with iter = 4000; warmup = 2000; thin = 1; total post-warmup draws = 8000

Table B2 – Regression Coefficients

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Polarization Intercept	-0.83	0.53	-1.89	0.2	1	2247	4206
Unified Control Intercept	-0.35	0.55	-1.42	0.75	1	2549	3840
Polarization Pre-Interruption	0.65	0.36	-0.05	1.37	1	7047	6039
Polarization Post-Interruption	0.18	0.3	-0.41	0.77	1	7127	5791
Polarization New Legislation	-0.1	0.07	-0.23	0.04	1	8455	6294
Polarization GDP per Capita	0.06	0.04	-0.02	0.13	1	4900	5133
Unified Control Pre-Interruption	-0.46	0.37	-1.19	0.25	1	7327	6218
Unified Control Post-Interruption	1.31	0.34	0.66	2	1	7036	5514
Unified Control New Legislation	0.03	0.07	-0.1	0.16	1	7861	6012
Unified Control GDP per Capita	0.15	0.04	0.07	0.23	1	4941	5785

Author's elaboration.

B.2 Continuous predictor, BMM model

Table B3 – Multilevel Hyperparameters: ~country (Number of levels: 17)

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
SD (Polarization Intercept)	1.64	0.41	1.01	2.63	1	1838	3375
SD (Unified Control Intercept)	1.47	0.35	0.92	2.28	1	2463	4146

Author's elaboration. Draws: 4 chains, each with iter = 4000; warmup = 2000; thin = 1; total post-warmup draws = 8000

Table B4 – Regression Coefficients

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Polarization Intercept	-0.75	0.56	-1.9	0.34	1	2559	3731
Unified Control Intercept	-0.24	0.54	-1.3	0.85	1	2386	4107
Polarization Interruption	-0.09	0.05	-0.19	0.01	1	7325	6018
Polarization New Legislation	-0.09	0.07	-0.23	0.05	1	7324	5857
Polarization GDP per Capita	0.06	0.04	-0.01	0.13	1	4790	5650
Unified Control Interruption	0.34	0.08	0.2	0.5	1	7010	5700
Unified Control New Legislation	0.02	0.07	-0.11	0.15	1	8389	6032
Unified Control GDP per Capita	0.13	0.04	0.05	0.22	1	4477	4993

Author's elaboration.

Annex C – Block 3

C.1 Observed vs. synthetic interruptions, categorical predictors, BMM model

Table C1 – Multilevel Hyperparameters: ~country (Number of levels: 17)

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
SD (Constraints Intercept)	0.18	0.04	0.12	0.26	1	2924	3986
SD (Exec. needs. conf. Intercept)	0.29	0.06	0.2	0.42	1	2150	3127
SD (Ideo. dist. Intercept)	0.08	0.02	0.05	0.12	1	2741	4476
SD (Herf. gov Intercept)	0.2	0.04	0.14	0.29	1	2922	3925
SD (Herf. opp Intercept)	0.16	0.03	0.11	0.24	1	2759	3817

Author's elaboration. Draws: 4 chains, each with iter = 4000; warmup = 2000; thin = 1; total post-warmup draws = 8000

Table C2 – Regression coefficients

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints Intercept	0.43	0.05	0.33	0.54	1	2671	4525
Exec. needs. conf. Intercept	0.24	0.08	0.09	0.39	1	2215	3535
Ideo. dist. Intercept	0.13	0.03	0.07	0.18	1	3322	4497
Herf. gov Intercept	0.82	0.06	0.7	0.93	1	2911	4806
Herf. opp Intercept	0.49	0.05	0.39	0.6	1	3604	4807
Constraints Synth. Post-Int	0.19	0.03	0.13	0.24	1	8344	6535
Constraints Synth. Pre-Int	0.17	0.03	0.11	0.23	1	9158	6489
Constraints Obs. Post-Int	0.1	0.03	0.06	0.15	1	8309	5932

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints Obs. Pre-Int	0.12	0.03	0.06	0.19	1	9060	6412
Constraints New Legislation	-0.01	0	-0.02	0	1	10410	6283
Constraints GDP per Capita	0.02	0	0.01	0.02	1	9035	6551
Exec. needs. conf. Synth. Post-Int	0.12	0.03	0.07	0.18	1	8668	7083
Exec. needs. conf. Synth. Pre-Int	0.09	0.03	0.03	0.16	1	9335	6396
Exec. needs. conf. Obs. Post-Int	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.14	1	8515	6669
Exec. needs. conf. Obs. Pre-Int	0.21	0.03	0.15	0.28	1	9122	6834
Exec. needs. conf. New Legislation	0	0.01	-0.01	0.01	1	12042	5987
Exec. needs. conf. GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0	1	9764	6584
Ideo. dist. Synth. Post-Int	-0.04	0.02	-0.07	-0.01	1	10719	6128
Ideo. dist. Synth. Pre-Int	-0.05	0.02	-0.09	-0.02	1	10851	6544
Ideo. dist. Obs. Post- Int	-0.02	0.02	-0.05	0.01	1	9931	6552
Ideo. dist. Obs. Pre- Int	0.02	0.02	-0.02	0.06	1	9883	6786
Ideo. dist. New Legislation	0	0	-0.01	0	1	13303	6246
Ideo. dist. GDP per Capita	0.01	0	0	0.01	1	9717	7073
Herf. gov Synth. Post-Int	-0.1	0.03	-0.16	-0.03	1	11144	6541
Herf. gov Synth. Pre- Int	-0.11	0.04	-0.19	-0.04	1	11170	6656
Herf. gov Obs. Post- Int	0.05	0.03	-0.01	0.11	1	9926	6335

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Herf. gov Obs. Pre-Int	0.07	0.04	-0.01	0.15	1	9875	6585
Herf. gov New Legislation	0	0.01	-0.01	0.01	1	12064	6090
Herf. gov GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0	1	10064	6707
Herf. opp Synth. Post-Int	0.08	0.03	0.02	0.15	1	11111	6067
Herf. opp Synth. Pre-Int	0.14	0.04	0.07	0.21	1	11911	6504
Herf. opp Obs. Post-Int	-0.04	0.03	-0.1	0.01	1	10442	6737
Herf. opp Obs. Pre-Int	0.04	0.04	-0.03	0.12	1	11075	6449
Herf. opp New Legislation	0.01	0.01	0	0.02	1	11755	6287
Herf. opp GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0.01	1	10256	6062

Author's elaboration.

Table C3 – Further Distributional Parameters

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Sigma (Constraints)	0.18	0.01	0.17	0.19	1	10200	6210
Sigma (Exec. needs. conf.)	0.18	0.01	0.17	0.19	1	10065	6515
Sigma (Ideo. dist.)	0.11	0	0.1	0.11	1	10514	5904
Sigma (Herf. gov)	0.21	0.01	0.2	0.22	1	11012	6202
Sigma (Herf. opp)	0.21	0.01	0.2	0.22	1	11436	5842

Author's elaboration.

Residual correlations

Residual Correlation	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints & Exec. needs. conf.	0.56	0.03	0.5	0.62	1	9534	6552
Constraints & Ideo. dist.	-0.21	0.04	-0.29	-0.13	1	12045	6365
Exec. needs. conf. & Ideo. dist.	0.04	0.04	-0.04	0.12	1	12088	6157
Constraints & Herf. gov	-0.11	0.04	-0.19	-0.03	1	11854	6061
Exec. needs. conf. & Herf. gov	-0.01	0.04	-0.09	0.07	1	11975	6123
Ideo. dist. & Herf. gov	0.23	0.04	0.14	0.3	1	10617	6397
Constraints & Herf. opp	-0.17	0.04	-0.25	-0.09	1	11703	6090
Exec. needs. conf. & Herf. opp	-0.03	0.04	-0.11	0.06	1	10420	5972
Ideo. dist. & Herf. opp	-0.12	0.04	-0.2	-0.04	1	11615	5897
Herf. gov & Herf. opp	0.09	0.04	0.01	0.17	1	10564	5573

Author's elaboration.

C.2 Continuous predictors, BMM model

Table C4 – Multilevel Hyperparameters: ~country (Number of levels: 17)

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
SD (Constraints Intercept)	0.18	0.04	0.12	0.26	1	3352	4572
SD (Exec. needs. conf. Intercept)	0.29	0.06	0.2	0.43	1	3089	4320
SD (Ideo. dist. Intercept)	0.08	0.02	0.05	0.12	1	3530	4664

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
SD (Herf. gov Intercept)	0.2	0.04	0.13	0.29	1	2896	4970
SD (Herf. opp Intercept)	0.16	0.03	0.11	0.24	1	3114	4446

Author's elaboration. Draws: 4 chains, each with iter = 4000; warmup = 2000; thin = 1; total post-warmup draws = 8000 (Number of observations: 574)

Table C5 – Regression coefficients

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints Intercept	0.47	0.05	0.37	0.57	1	3698	4983
Exec. needs. conf. Intercept	0.27	0.08	0.11	0.42	1	2842	3920
Ideo. dist. Intercept	0.12	0.03	0.07	0.17	1	4360	5541
Herf. gov Intercept	0.81	0.06	0.69	0.93	1	3541	4926
Herf. opp Intercept	0.52	0.05	0.42	0.62	1	4372	5716
Constraints Time	0.01	0.02	-0.03	0.04	1	6390	5914
Constraints Group (Synth.)	0.12	0.06	0	0.23	1	8898	6933
Constraints Group (Obs.)	0.19	0.04	0.11	0.27	1	10471	6768
Constraints New Legislation	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0	1	11893	6514
Constraints GDP per Capita	0.02	0	0.01	0.02	1	8757	6244
Constraints Time:Group (Synth.)	0	0.03	-0.05	0.05	1	6517	6194
Constraints Time:Group (Obs.)	-0.03	0.02	-0.07	0	1	6152	5657
Exec. needs. conf. Time	0.03	0.02	-0.01	0.06	1	6832	6092

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Exec. needs. conf. Group (Synth.)	0.07	0.06	-0.04	0.2	1	9620	6609
Exec. needs. conf. Group (Obs.)	0.18	0.04	0.09	0.26	1	10757	6245
Exec. needs. conf. New Legislation	0	0.01	-0.01	0.01	1	11827	6152
Exec. needs. conf. GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0	1	10155	6687
Exec. needs. conf. Time:Group (Synth.)	-0.03	0.03	-0.08	0.03	1	6992	6088
Exec. needs. conf. Time:Group (Obs.)	-0.06	0.02	-0.1	-0.02	1	6771	5956
Ideo. dist. Time	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.03	1	7530	6371
Ideo. dist. Group (Synth.)	-0.05	0.04	-0.12	0.02	1	10490	5948
Ideo. dist. Group (Obs.)	-0.03	0.02	-0.08	0.02	1	10303	5771
Ideo. dist. New Legislation	0	0	-0.01	0	1	11792	6588
Ideo. dist. GDP per Capita	0.01	0	0	0.01	1	9446	6460
Ideo. dist. Time:Group (Synth.)	0	0.02	-0.03	0.03	1	7369	5515
Ideo. dist. Time:Group (Obs.)	0	0.01	-0.03	0.02	1	7477	6109
Herf. gov Time	0.04	0.02	0	0.08	1	7711	6095
Herf. gov Group (Synth.)	-0.13	0.07	-0.26	0	1	10037	6749
Herf. gov Group (Obs.)	-0.04	0.05	-0.13	0.05	1	11299	6465
Herf. gov New Legislation	0	0.01	-0.01	0.01	1	13172	6613
Herf. gov GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0	1	9670	6326

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Herf. gov Time:Group (Synth.)	-0.03	0.03	-0.08	0.03	1	7721	6093
Herf. gov Time:Group (Obs.)	-0.02	0.02	-0.07	0.02	1	7604	5930
Herf. opp Time	0.01	0.02	-0.03	0.05	1	7807	6249
Herf. opp Group (Synth.)	0.09	0.07	-0.04	0.22	1	12091	6327
Herf. opp Group (Obs.)	-0.1	0.05	-0.2	-0.01	1	11336	5893
Herf. opp New Legislation	0.01	0.01	0	0.02	1	13960	5679
Herf. opp GDP per Capita	0	0	-0.01	0	1	9300	6183
Herf. opp Time:Group (Synth.)	-0.02	0.03	-0.08	0.04	1	8012	6353
Herf. opp Time:Group (Obs.)	0	0.02	-0.04	0.04	1	7450	5955

Author's elaboration.

Table C6 – Further Distributional Parameters

Parameter	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Sigma (Constraints)	0.18	0.01	0.17	0.19	1	10197	6720
Sigma (Exec. needs. conf.)	0.18	0.01	0.17	0.2	1	10940	7032
Sigma (Ideo. dist.)	0.11	0	0.1	0.12	1	11026	6215
Sigma (Herf. gov)	0.21	0.01	0.2	0.22	1	11226	6196
Sigma (Herf. opp)	0.21	0.01	0.2	0.22	1	12200	5993

Author's elaboration.

Table C7 – Residual Correlations

Residual Correlation	Estimate	Est. Error	l-95% CI	u-95% CI	Rhat	Bulk ESS	Tail ESS
Constraints & Exec. needs. conf.	0.57	0.03	0.51	0.62	1	9567	7019
Constraints & Ideo. dist.	-0.23	0.04	-0.3	-0.14	1	12838	6994
Exec. needs. conf. & Ideo. dist.	0.04	0.04	-0.04	0.12	1	11293	6371
Constraints & Herf. gov	-0.11	0.04	-0.19	-0.03	1	10976	6227
Exec. needs. conf. & Herf. gov	0.01	0.04	-0.07	0.09	1	11830	6034
Ideo. dist. & Herf. gov	0.24	0.04	0.16	0.32	1	11789	5447
Constraints & Herf. opp	-0.12	0.04	-0.2	-0.03	1	12429	5132
Exec. needs. conf. & Herf. opp	0.01	0.04	-0.07	0.1	1	12066	6030
Ideo. dist. & Herf. opp	-0.14	0.04	-0.22	-0.06	1	12375	6437
Herf. gov & Herf. opp	0.06	0.04	-0.02	0.15	1	11665	5824

Author's elaboration.