

# The organizational ground of cabinet redesign: portfolios and presidency in Brazilian coalitional presidentialism

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## Abstract

This article approaches jointly at portfolios and the presidency in the study of cabinet politics, which brings the organizational features of executive politics into its focus. We analyzed these features focusing on presidential strategies of agency design and the appointment of ministers and presidential advisors. We argue that presidents redesign their cabinets, by either portfolio or the office of the president, to deal with coordination problems of the cabinets. We use a novel dataset to offer empirical evidence that focusing on cabinet redesign offers a more comprehensive picture of presidential strategies for managing cabinets than does a strict analysis of cabinet reshuffling looking only at the entry and exit of ministers. Cabinet redesign alters the organizational base of executive power and redefines the power that the president actually shares with other parties and groups. We analyzed Brazilian presidential cabinets from 1990 to 2022. We first describe the changes in the cabinet units and, after, estimate the cabinet survival of ministers and office holders. We found that presidents alter the make-up of all units of the cabinet, portfolios and the presidency agencies, and resort to reallocation of all ministers and presidential advisors, as needed.

**Keywords:** Cabinet; Presidency, Ministers, Survival Analysis, Brazil.

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## Introduction

Coalitional presidentialism is an enduring feature of cabinet politics in Brazil. Even presidents who decided to lead single-party governments were pressured to distribute portfolios and to bring allies and “strange bedfellows” into the Executive branch. This story has been narrated with eyes on the presidents and the ministers, partisan or not. Surprisingly, the merits and misfortunes of government have been attributed mainly to variations in presidential leadership in forming and maintaining their cabinets.

Scholars have been assessing presidents' leadership focusing on the institutional powers and, residually, on the personal skills of the Chief Executive, overshadowing the organizational ground from which they operate. However, organizational features might be prior conditions that do, or do not, make such prerogatives and attributes necessary or relevant. From this perspective, the analysis of cabinet politics needs to go beyond the allocation and management of portfolios. It requires understanding the organizational conditions that inform presidents' decisions about how, and to what extent, to share power with parties and ministers, as well as to restrict the discretion of those ministers over the administration. Therefore, a comprehensive model of cabinet politics also needs to include the presidency, the highest level of executive authority.

Our central goal is to establish a theoretical perspective addressing presidential organization as a key aspect of cabinet politics. On the one hand, a vast literature on the institutional presidency sheds light on the presidents' strategies to expand their powers administratively, to handle conflicts with congress and the bureaucracies (Moe 1985; Howell 2003; Mayer and Price 2002; Rudalevige 2002). However, the interplay between the presidency and the cabinet members persists insufficiently investigated in presidential studies. On the other hand, changes in presidential organization and cabinet design are barely explored in the scholarship on cabinet politics (Barbieri and Vercesi 2013; Camerlo and Martinez-Gallardo 2018; Sieberer *et al.* 2021; Kuipers, Yesilkagit, and Carroll 2021). Cabinet reshuffles are generally seen as a response to conflicts and coordination problems among members of the government. However, whether the redesign of the presidency leverages the president's ability to anticipate or deal with these problems is hardly addressed.

In this article, we question whether presidents signal their willingness to shake up the cabinet through changes that also include the presidency. Do presidents adopt different strategies regarding the organization and management of ministries and the presidency's agencies? The presidents anticipate the coordination problems and seek to fortify themselves so that they can maintain the presidential leadership in face of the cabinet. We argue that changes in the presidency are also part of the redesign of the cabinet. Changes of ministers are decisive moves in the management of the cabinet, but this answer is more far-reaching. Presidents also strategically change the organizational bases for exercising their leadership. To do this, they change the structures and appointees of the presidency. Therefore, the organization of the presidency undergoes significant changes, and presidential advisors also enter the dance of the chairs, similar to those in charge of regular ministries. Thus, the present study refreshes the research agenda on the institutional presidency, which pays little attention to cabinet dynamics. It also invigorates the scholarship on cabinet politics, exploring the organizational basis of the interaction between the president and the ministers.

To carry out this investigation, we analyzed the cabinet redesign in Brazil from 1990 to 2021, focusing on presidential strategies of agency design and appointment of ministers and presidential advisors. Coalition governments prevailed during this period; however, they varied significantly concerning the makeup and dynamics of the cabinet. We explored the changes in the presidency's agencies and the survival of the ministers and officeholders. We used a novel dataset to offer empirical evidence that the focus on cabinet redesign offers a more comprehensive picture of presidential strategies for managing cabinets than does the strict analysis of cabinet reshuffling through the entry and exit of ministers. This redesign alters the organizational base of executive power and redefines the power that the president actually shares with other parties and groups.

This article is organized into five sections beyond this introduction. First, we develop our theoretical framework on cabinet redesign with a focus on both the portfolio and the presidency; Second, we discuss cabinet politics in Brazil and the gaps in the analysis of the organizational aspects of presidential cabinet redesign; in the next section we discuss the organizational setting of coalitional presidentialism in Brazil; in the fourth section we present the data and methods used; and, finally, we discuss the paper's findings.

## Bringing the presidency into cabinet politics

Our theoretical framework stresses agency problems related to cabinet politics that are largely studied in different systems of governments, but also in relation to both multi-party (Muller and Strom, Kaare 2003; Indridason and Kam 2008; Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008; Camerlo and Martinez-Gallardo 2018) and single-party cabinets (Martínez-Gallardo and Schleiter 2015). The heads of government react by fine-tuning their responses to the magnitude of the risks posited by cabinet members. In some circumstances, they prefer moderate and perhaps not very offensive reactions - such as reallocation of ministerial jurisdictions (Sieberer *et al.* 2021; Kuipers, Yesilkagit, and Carroll 2021), budget control (Larsson 1993), or watchdog mechanisms (Thies 2001) - to cross-party agreements. In other situations, presidents move chess pieces and cabinet reshuffling is the choice, either to replace or reassign ministers and parties (Indridason and Kam 2008; Martínez-Gallardo and Schleiter 2015). Yet, some circumstances push them to react more radically, putting an end to the coalition and, eventually, to the government. However, how chief executives keep control of their ministers and deal with moral hazards remains puzzling, despite the impressive advance of empirical research on this topic.

Strategies for forming and reshuffling the cabinet are crucial for the president. However, it is necessary to take a step back and understand the organizational conditions from which the president implements such strategies.

A vast set of scholarly contributions on coalitional governments explore agency problems looking at the cabinet make-up and the interplay among its members within the government. The literature on Brazilian coalitional presidentialism does not shrink from this. However, scholars address presidents' responses to the risks of agency loss in different ways. Some scholars contend that the president restricts his agenda power, leaving room for the legislative agenda of the majority when he forms a ruling coalition to ensure his success in congress. The rationale is quite straightforward: presidents share governing responsibilities with coalition members because they take into account the voters' preferences indicated by the distribution of seats in Congress (Limongi and Figueiredo 2009). So, presidents use their institutional powers to "protect the majority" from horizontal conflicts in Congress while seeking to deliver policy goods to their members. In this way, intra-cabinet and legislative battles with the potential to lead to

tensions and cabinet breakdown are avoided. This strategy, of presidential self-restraint, is also contained in the expectation that the coalition government works as a presidentially-led legislative cartel when the president assures veto powers on the legislative agenda to cabinet members (Amorim Neto, Cox, and McCubbins 2003). Other scholars emphasize presidential self-restriction less, and focus, instead, on the tools the president can use to compensate for party and ministerial support without losing cabinet leadership. They argue that the president can anticipate and circumvent conflicts by using his executive toolbox (patronage, budget, favors) without sacrificing policy (Raile, Pereira, and Power 2011; Chaisty, Cheeseman, and Power 2018; Bertholini and Pereira 2017).

Although we agree that a multi-party cabinet implies some level of power-sharing, we disagree that presidents are doomed to make limited choices. They can regulate the discretion of cabinet members organizationally, by defining the powers retained in their own hands and the hands of their presidential staff. As Camerlo and Martinez-Gallardo (2018) point out, the presidential strategy of portfolio allocation involves changes in cabinet units before distributing them. Yet, these changes are not restricted to ministries, reaching the presidential organization itself (Inácio and Llanos 2015; 2016; Mejía-Guinand, Botero, and Solano 2018). It should be noted that the redesign of the presidency establishes hierarchies across ministries, as well as between the ministries and the presidential office.

We are primarily concerned with coalition governments and whether a president's willingness to share power is constrained by the risks of loss of agency that these alliances may signal. Presidents build viable coalitions, rather than their most desired ones. Therefore, the cost of "presidential self-restraint strategies" varies, depending on the diverging preferences among cabinet members and the institutional tools that presidents count on to handle them.

Preference divergence - feeding distrust along authority lines - between presidents, parties or bureaucracies is a critical factor in presidential choices of whether to centralize powers on different decisions within the presidency or to delegate them to strategic ministries (Rudalevige 2002; Rudalevige and Lewis 2005). Presidents strategize the redesign of the presidency in reaction to external and internal conflicts. As a result, the number of agencies and staff responsible for them expand, making policymaking more centralized (Krause 2009; Mitchell 2005). These organizational changes may encourage unilateral measures by the president to advance his agendas and counter those who might

threaten them. Empirical research has amply demonstrated the institutional mechanisms that chief executives use to prevent or punish undesired ministerial discretion (Muller and Strom 2003; Thies 2001; Andeweg 2000).

Hence, we claim that a president can solve coordination problems alternatively by introducing a new equilibrium, by modifying the agenda items he or she pursues with the coalition. As the powers of the president extend beyond legislating and appointing, an interesting puzzle appears: what agendas and powers to implement them are shared? We claim that the redesign of the cabinet —either through changes of ministries and presidential units, or as reshuffles of ministers and office holders — can be interpreted in this direction. As responses to internal coordination problems, these strategies modify the bargaining environment within the executive and turn the agenda-sharing actions into selective moves of the president.

It is generally believed that the organization of the presidency is not part of the game of cabinet politics, and does not suffer from changes thereto. One explanation for this may be that the president seeks to preserve his support structure and keep it off the negotiating table with the political parties and supporters. Yet, how can the changes in the presidency and the rotation of its officeholders be explained?

We argue that oscillations in the size of the presidency and the rotation of ministers and presidential advisors reflect critical aspects of cabinet politics. Organizational changes in the presidency derive from strategies of centralization or decentralization of policies, in a tradeoff of tasks and responsibilities between ministers and presidential advisors. In the same vein, presidential advisors are no longer protected from dismissal from their posts. In fact, presidents tend to surround themselves with their "own people", which can be seen as reducing the chances of conflicts with the president and, consequently, lowering the risk of dismissal. However, the permanence of these presidential advisors can be curtailed by factors such as intra-coalition conflicts and external pressures such as scandals, political demands, etc., that also condemn ministers "to death" in the cabinet. Closeness to the president can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, presidents may prefer these people to reshuffle the cabinet, moving them to regular ministries to ensure their own people in these positions rather than recruiting other ministers externally. They are, in this sense, a stock supply of potential ministers. On the other hand, the wrongdoings of these advisors can contaminate the president's image and

popularity more immediately. Under certain circumstances, the cost of keeping them is greater, even if they are close to the president, precisely because of this proximity.

As is widely discussed in the literature, presidents have resorted to such changes to reallocate parties, improve policy performance, and respond to exogenous shocks. Therefore, ministers' attributes such as party affiliation and policy expertise are used as the main predictors of ministerial survival in the cabinet (Camerlo and Pérez-Liñán 2015; Martínez-Gallardo and Schleiter 2015). Unless there is reason to expect that the selection of cabinet members is biased towards such factors, these factors may affect the chances of survival of ministers and presidential advisors in the same way. A possible exception might be the greater relevance of criteria such as loyalty and being a co-partisan of the president in the selection of presidential advisors.

### **Cabinet politics in Brazil**

Coalitional presidentialism has been the dominant way that Brazilian presidents form and manage their cabinets. Having been politically more unstable during the semi-democratic period, from 1946 to 1964, Brazilian governments have operated under different conditions since the re-democratization in 1988. The strengthening of the powers of the president and the legislative parties has modified the conditions for legislative bargaining during this current period, despite high levels of political fragmentation and polarization (Figueiredo and Limongi, 1998; Amorim Neto, 2022; Santos, 2003).

Seven presidents have held office in Brazil since 1990: five were popularly elected (Collor, Cardoso, Lula, Rousseff, and Bolsonaro) and two were nominated following the impeachment of the elected president (Itamar and Temer). Except for Cardoso, all presidents were elected without legislative majorities in runoff elections. Since the introduction of the reelection rule in 1997, three of them have been reelected for a second term, but only two, Cardoso and Silva, have completed the two consecutive terms.

Thirty-three cabinets were formed by seven Brazilian presidents after 1990. A new cabinet is formed because of either a presidential election/removal or a change in party composition. On average, Brazilian presidential cabinets last around a year (374 days) since the re-democratization. Table 1 details the Brazilian presidential cabinets since



1990, the number of member parties, and the legislative seats they control in the lower house.

Table 1 - Presidential cabinets in Brazil, 1988-2021.

Cabinet	Cabinet Duration			Number of Cabinet Parties	Legislative seats	
	Start	End	Days		Coalition	Presidential Party
Collor 1	15/03/90	12/10/90	207	2	24.04	5.05
Collor 2	13/10/90	31/01/91	108	3	30.02	5.96
Collor 3	01/02/91	14/04/92	433	3	33.40	8.15
Collor 4	15/04/92	30/09/92	165	5	42.15	6.16
Franco 1	01/10/92	30/08/93	329	5	53.28	Non-partisan
Franco 2	31/08/93	24/01/94	144	5	58.85	Non-partisan
Franco 3	25/01/94	31/12/94	336	4	54.67	Non-partisan
Cardoso I 1	01/01/95	25/04/96	474	4	56.34	12.09
Cardoso I 2	26/04/96	31/12/98	965	5	77.19	16.57
Cardoso II 1	01/01/99	05/03/02	1144	4	67.84	19.30
Cardoso II 2	06/03/02	31/12/02	295	3	45.22	18.32
Silva I 1	01/01/03	22/01/04	381	8	42.69	17.74
Silva I 2	23/01/04	31/01/05	368	8	62.18	17.54
Silva I 3	01/02/05	19/05/05	108	7	57.70	17.54
Silva I 4	20/05/05	22/07/05	62	6	58.28	17.74
Silva I 5	23/07/05	31/12/06	518	7	69.59	17.54
Silva II 1	01/01/07	01/04/07	90	8	60.62	16.18
Silva II 2	02/04/07	27/09/09	895	9	67.84	15.98
Silva II 3	28/09/09	31/12/10	453	8	62.96	15.40
Rousseff I 1	01/01/11	01/03/12	420	7	63.55	17.15
Rousseff I 2	02/03/12	02/10/13	570	8	61.60	16.96
Rousseff I 3	03/10/13	31/12/14	448	7	55.75	17.15
Rousseff II 1	01/01/15	18/03/15	77	10	61.79	13.26
Rousseff II 2	19/03/15	16/03/16	357	9	53.41	13.26
Rousseff II 3	17/03/16	30/03/16	13	8	45.22	11.50
Rousseff II 4	31/03/16	12/04/16	12	7	45.22	11.31
Rousseff II 5	13/04/16	11/05/16	28	6	36.06	11.31
Temer I	12/05/16	30/08/16	108	9	61.01	13.06
Temer II 1	31/08/16	17/05/17	257	9	60.23	12.48
Temer II 2	18/05/17	31/01/19	613	8	58.48	12.48
Bolsonaro 1	01/01/19	19/11/19	318	1	10.14	10.14
Bolsonaro 2	20/11/19	31/12/22	1121	0 <sup>(1)</sup>	-	Non-partisan

Source: CEBRAP - Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisa e Planejamento, 2021.

(1) The president left his party and kept himself independent.



These cabinets, almost all coalitional, vary mainly with respect to the number and ideological distances between the member parties. Minority presidents, facing increasing parliamentary fragmentation, formed fragmented and ideologically heterogeneous coalitions. Although the ideological positions of the presidents were not that far from those of the median legislators, except for Collor and Bolsonaro, the intra-coalitional distances varied considerably.

Coalitional presidentialism in Brazil has had both its days of glory and its setbacks during this period. After the initial political turbulence, culminating in the impeachment of President Collor in 1992, the relative stability of governments held until mid-2014. Then, successive political crises led to a second impeachment (President Rousseff) and unstable subsequent governments. To what extent can these variations be associated with the cabinet politics adopted by these presidents?

Cabinet politics can be described as the way that the president shares power with members of the government, and which tools are used. The dominant claim in the scholarship on coalitional presidentialism in Brazil is that the degree of cabinet coalescence, and presidents' agenda powers, are the major drivers of coalition discipline and minor conflicts among government members. While some scholars see these results as derived from the president's institutional powers (Figueiredo and Limongi 1999; Santos 2003; Freitas 2016), others see them as contingent on presidential strategies regarding cabinet formation and granting of veto power to members (Amorim Neto 2006; Amorim Neto, Cox, and McCubbins 2003).

A contending branch of scholarship examines more flexible strategies that presidents use to reward parties, according to their expected returns for participation in government (Meireles 2019), to remediate portfolio allocation biases and ministerial drift (Raile, Pereira, and Power 2011; Bertholini and Pereira 2017), and to control some of them (Praça, Freitas, and Hoepers 2011; Guerra 2019). According to this line of scholarship, power sharing may occur at different levels and be mediated through different resources controlled by the executive branch. Furthermore, recent studies point out that the conditions for forming and managing coalitional cabinets in Brazil are changing endogenously. According to them, the president's agenda control has been reduced while the influence of legislative parties over lawmaking and distributive politics has been leveraged (Almeida 2019).

We claim that these analyses do not tell the whole story. Their contributions to understanding the scope and variations of presidential strategies are generally hampered in two ways.

First, by a restrictive definition of a cabinet, focusing on ministries or agencies outside the structure of the president's office. Special ministries, or ministries without a portfolio, and secretaries with ministerial status are generally overlooked despite their strategic value to the presidents when deciding what powers to share and what to retain in their own hands. Even when the latter are counted as part of the cabinet, their differential value is little discussed. For instance, in Brazil, several units with ministerial status are part of the structure of the presidency, even though they lack their own portfolios and budgets. However, from an organizational point of view, they are differentiated by the salience of their jurisdictions for the presidency, and by their role of directly advising the head of the executive branch (Inácio 2006; Inácio and Llanos 2015; Lameirão 2015). Therefore, research on cabinet politics either ignores these units or else considers only presidential units with ministerial status when analyzing cabinet allocation or reshuffling.

The second way that understanding is hampered is by the analysis of cabinet politics being focused on the president and ministers. The role of the presidency in cabinet dynamics is relatively ignored. Inácio and Llanos (2015; 2016) stressed the differentiated strategies that chief executives have used to deal with the problems of cabinet coordination from the redesign of the presidency. Inácio (Inácio 2018) showed that Brazilian presidents have led coalition cabinets from a single-party or non-partisan presidency when considering the party linkage of presidential advisors. Most presidents kept their allies at a safe distance from the presidency.

Here, we adopt a distinct conceptual and empirical strategy for analyzing cabinet politics in Brazilian coalitional presidentialism. We look separately at the presidential strategies targeting the ministries and the presidency which, together, form the presidential cabinet. Here, we adopt a distinct conceptual and empirical strategy for analyzing reshuffling and centralization decisions. We use two indicators to analyze whether the presidential strategies directed at these units are similar or not. The first indicator is the variation in the size of the presidency, with its expansion seen as indicative of policymaking that is centralized in the hands of the presidential staff. The second indicator is the survival rate of officeholders and appointees to ministries.

## **The organizational setting of coalitional presidentialism: cabinet composition and portfolio reallocation**

The organizational bases of the relationship between the president and ministers/officeholders are defined endogenously by the chief executive through the design of the cabinet, an aspect largely ignored in the literature. Decisions about how many portfolios and agencies, their jurisdictions and subordination to the presidency are non-trivial aspects of the bargaining for the formation of governments and their cabinets. Presidents create, terminate, merge, or divide portfolios to regulate the influence of policymakers in the decision-making processes. They also symbolically signal policy shifts and establish hierarchies within the cabinet. The presidency is not insulated from such moves, and derives its contours from these choices. In general, the tasks and units centralized in the presidency migrate from the hands of ministers to those of officeholders turned Presidential advisors.

In general, presidents have prerogatives to define the internal organization of the Executive branch, but the scope of this discretion is regulated constitutionally. In Brazil, the president has exclusive legislative initiative in this matter, subject to approval by Congress. Since 2001, the president has gained greater discretion in redesigning the cabinet and structures of the Executive. Constitutional Amendment no. 32 requires legislative approval only in cases of the creation and abolition of ministries and agencies. Transferring jurisdiction and units between portfolios can be implemented by autonomous presidential decrees.

Throughout the mandate, cabinet sizes have varied between 23 (Bolsonaro) and 40 units (Rousseff II) and have been diverse in their internal makeup. We distinguish three types of units: (a) regular ministry; (b) special or extraordinary ministry, when the minister has ministerial status but there is no portfolio; and (c) presidential unit, which are units directly subordinated to the president and whose ministers may or may not have ministerial status. Figure 1 shows the variations in the internal configuration of the cabinets, by presidents, in the analyzed period.

Collor and Bolsonaro undertook the redesign of the inaugural cabinet to signal political change and aversion to coalition politics. In both cases, the number of portfolios increased through the creation of super-ministries. However, Collor did this by expanding

the presidency with centralized policies, while Bolsonaro kept the presidency compact but heavily politicized. On the other hand, larger cabinets have derived from double expansion; *i.e.*, of ministries and units of the presidency, as observed in the Silva and Rousseff governments. Presidents sworn in after impeachments, Franco and Temer, formed intermediary cabinets with decentralized policy-making in ministries headed by smaller presidencies.

The redesign of the Presidency deserves special attention. Inácio and Llanos (Inácio and Llanos 2016) argue that the coordination problems of heterogeneous and fragmented coalitions, faced by elected presidents, are associated with the expansion of the presidency in Brazil. Vieira (Vieira, 2017) demonstrated the president's extremism, *i.e.*, the distance of preferences between the president and the average coalition member, to be the driver of the centralization of agencies in the presidency. In addition to cabinet coordination tasks (Lameirão 2015), such problems seem to encourage the expansion of centralized policymaking, mainly in policy areas with strong reputational appeal for the president's party (Inácio, 2012). Such a move marked the redesign strategies of the presidency in the Silva and Rousseff governments with the creation of ministries directly subordinated to the presidency. Salient policy issues (women, racial equality, human rights) to the constituency of the presidential party, and with high potential to differentiate it from other coalition members, were centralized in the presidency. A short-lived expansion of the presidency occurred more discreetly during the transition to Cardoso's second term, indicating changes in the president's issue attention through the centralization of policy priorities in special secretariats of the presidency. However, a few months later, he decided to reduce the presidency size by extinguishing these units. In fact, the presidency has played a relevant role in the management of cabinets in Brazil, performing gatekeeping functions in relation to the cabinet members, but also establishing the organizational basis for presidential policymaking.

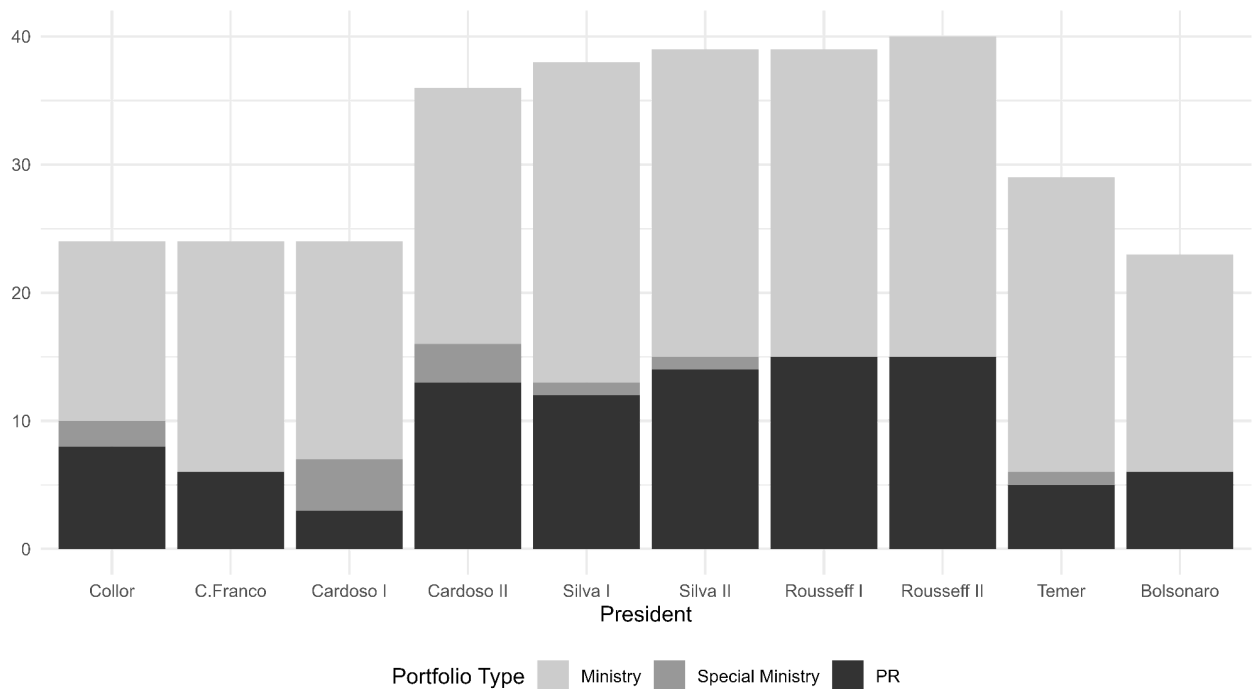


Figure 1. Cabinet units by presidential terms – Brazil, 1990 - 2021.  
Source: Presidential Cabinets Project, 2022.

Following this descriptive analysis of changes in the number of cabinet units, we analyzed whether the exit risks of ministers and presidential advisors are similar, indicating that the president strategically reallocates all these positions. Our expectations are, therefore, that the exit risks of ministers and office holders:

- a) do not differ by type of cabinet unit, but that there is an interaction effect between the type of unit and proximity to the president (the president's own people);
- b) are lower when they are partisan and have great expertise;
- c) are lower when they have been reallocated, i.e., are occupying other position(s) after their initial appointment;
- d) are higher when they are involved in conflicts inside or outside of the coalition.

## Data and Methods

To test our arguments, we analyzed the exit risks of ministers and presidential advisors in Brazil. We used a new database, on appointments to these positions, produced by the Presidential Cabinets Project. This database contains 589 appointments of

ministers and presidential advisors between 1990 and 2021. The unit of analysis is the appointment so, for each appointment post, there is an entry in the database.

Our dependent variable is status, a dummy that indicates whether the minister survived to the end of the term or was removed from office earlier. We consider the date of the administration's termination to be when the president completes his or her constitutional mandate or is removed from office due to impeachment proceedings. Except, in the case of Bolsonaro, we consider the end date for data collection, *i.e.*, January 08, 2022, to calculate the ministers' survival rate.

Our main variable of interest is the type of cabinet unit for which the minister or office holder is in charge, *i.e.*, whether he or she is a regular or special minister (1) or holds a position (ministerial or not) within the presidential organization (0). Presidential advisors are those appointed to ministerial or secretarial positions directly subordinate to the presidency. Extra-ordinary ministries were also computed as positions attached to the presidency, because they do not have a typical ministerial structure.

Four attributes of ministers and presidential advisors were considered: (1) *Own people*: whether they are "the president's own people", *i.e.*, whether they are members of the president's party or are non-partisans (the latter are considered among the presidential quota of ministers); (2) *partisanship*, whether they maintain some partisan link (1: some) or not (0: none); (3) *expertise*: whether the ministry or secretariat have ample, some or no expertise in the ministry's policy area; (4) *gender*: with women being the reference category. Two variables seek to capture the minister's trajectory both in the cabinet and in the context of his or her departure: first, *reallocation*: whether the appointee left the cabinet (0) or was dismissed to be reassigned to another ministerial or presidential position; Second, *exit\_cause*: whether the cause of the minister exit is due to (0) mandate termination; (1) either internal or external conflicts; (2) non-conflict. Internal conflicts refer to either interparty or policy divergence among ministers and the president, which can trigger a collective exit, with a departure of one or more parties, or the removal of an individual minister or office holder. External conflicts comprise pressures from the Congress, Judiciary, parties, subnational governments, and voters to remove a minister or presidential advisor (Silva and Medina 2022). It can be motivated by the poor performance of the minister, his or her involvement in corruption or political scandals, or exogenous shocks demanding policy shifts. Table 2 describes the distribution of these variables.

Table 2 - Descriptive Statistics.

	Unique (#)	Missing (%)	Mean	SD	Min	Median	Max
Days in office	331	0	561.5	451.1	11.0	396.0	2922.0
<b>Categorical Variables</b>						N	%
Status	False				253	43.0	
	True				336	57.0	
Portfolio type	Ministry				415	70.5	
	Special Ministry				12	2.0	
	Other				162	27.5	
Cabinet Unit	Presidential Unit				174	29.5	
	Regular/Special ministry				415	70.5	
Partisanship	None				185	31.4	
	Some				404	68.6	
Own people	Other				252	42.8	
	Own				332	56.4	
Expertise	Ample				428	72.7	
	None				37	6.3	
	Some				117	19.9	
Reallocation	Exit				523	88.8	
	Reassigned				66	11.2	
Exit Cause	Mandate termination				252	42.8	
	Conflict				152	25.8	
	Non conflict				185	31.4	
Sex	Man				542	92.0	
	Woman				47	8.0	
President	Collor				44	7.5	
	C.Franco				51	8.7	
	Cardoso I				41	7.0	
	Cardoso II				69	11.7	
	Silva I				68	11.5	
	Silva II				70	11.9	
	Rousseff I				76	12.9	
	Rousseff II				64	10.9	
	Temer				59	10.0	
	Bolsonaro				47	8.0	

The analysis of the trajectory of each minister throughout the presidential term implies a comparison between the appointment and the duration in office. As we are interested in this relationship, we estimated the effects of features that increase or decrease the survival time of a minister in office. To carry out this analysis, we resorted to survival models, which are canonical, non-parametric, statistical models in this field (King *et al.* 1990; Diermeier and Stevenson 1999; Berlinski *et al.* 2007; Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008).



An important discussion in this type of application considers how to define that an event has occurred, and how the data is censored. In the analysis of ministerial survival, especially considering governments that are still in progress, we have to define a “right-censoring” cut-off point. For this study, we consider the date of January 08, 2022, as the limit for the occurrence of an event. Furthermore, we consider the ministers who left their posts, regardless of the reason, as events.

One way to visualize the pattern of survival over time is to present an estimate based on the Kaplan-Meier survival estimates process. The Kaplan-Meier graph draws on a survival table and shows the likelihood of an event happening over time. Figure 2 shows that the likelihood of cabinet composition being part of an existing government decreases as the cabinet duration increases.

Figure 2 shows the probability of a minister surviving as the presidential term progresses over time. We observed a wide heterogeneity among the different presidents, revealing different strategies for recomposing the presidency's organizational structure. Overall, the median length of each tenure is 676 days in office. However, the range goes from 277 days (Rousseff II) to 1185 days (Cardoso I). Shorter tenures are observed in more turbulent administrations. In Rousseff II and Collor (376 days), whose presidential terms were terminated due to impeachment proceedings and cabinet reshuffles were used to block this process. In Bolsonaro's government, marked by frequent intra-cabinet and interbranch conflicts, the median length is also short: 483 days. Longer tenures are a feature of more stable governments, in which the presidential terms were completed. However, there is a difference in the median length of tenures when comparing the first and second terms. For instance, ministers and officeholders spent 1185 and 785 days in office, in Cardoso I and II, respectively. In Silva's administrations, longer tenures are observed in both presidential terms: 902 and 1095 days in the first and second terms, respectively. However, they are slightly shorter in the first term, when the “mensalão” scandal triggered three cabinet reshuffles in 2005<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The corruption scandal, known as the *mensalão*, was denounced for corrupting a party in the coalition of President Silva's first term in office. The accusations of involvement of Presidency office holders in the scandal exposed the expansion of this structure during Silva's administration and the control of the presidential party over the positions created. The main accusation was the "buying of votes" of Congressmen. In reaction, the president changed the structure of the presidency and reshuffled the cabinet.

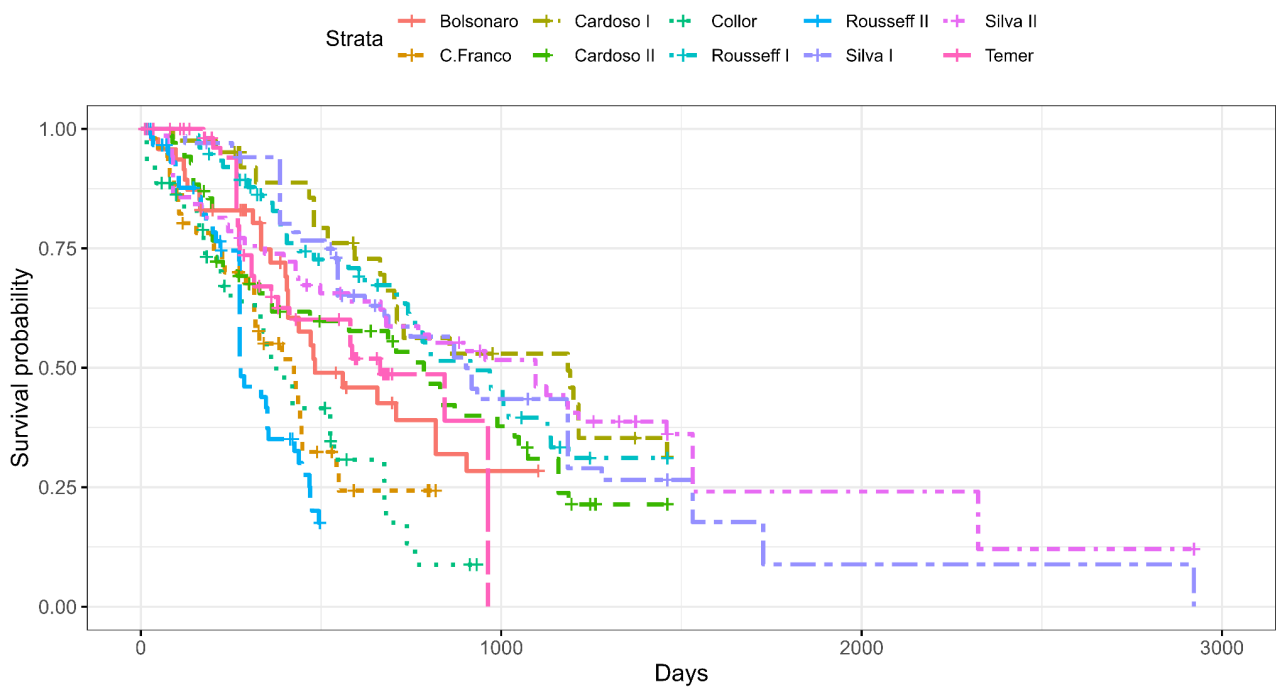


Figure 2. Ministerial Tenure - The Kaplan-Meier Survival Probability.  
Source: Presidential Cabinets Project, 2022.

### Results: Cox regression analysis

Having shown that the survival rate of ministers varies over the term and by president, we next examine what factors affect this outcome. Our main variable of interest is the type of cabinet unit, that is, whether presidential decisions to retain or dismiss ministers depend on the type of unit they control.

For that purpose, we built several Cox proportional hazards regression models, one of the most popular regression techniques for survival analysis. In these models, the measure of effect is the hazard rate (HR), which is the risk of failure (or an individual minister exits, in our example), given that the participant has survived up to a specific time. Figure 3 presents estimates of Cox proportional hazard models. We present hazard ratios, so coefficients greater than one represent increased hazard rates; while coefficients less than one suggest decreased hazard rates (see *Appendix 1*).

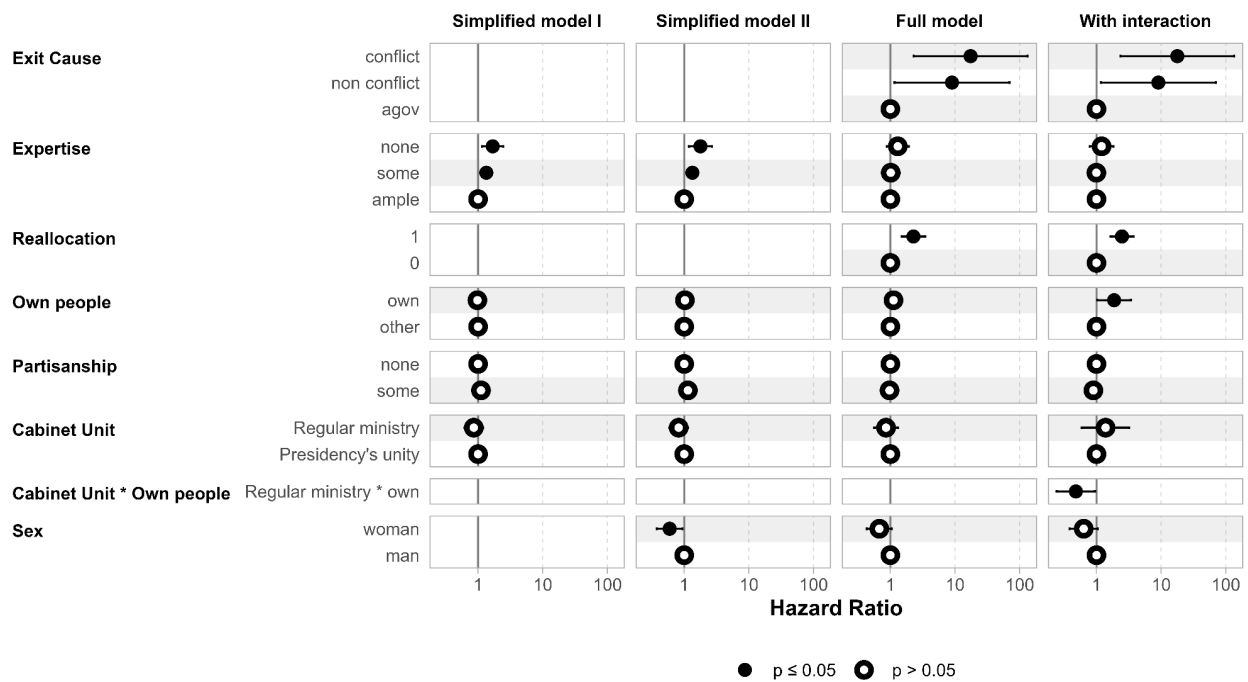


Figure 3. Cox proportional hazard models of minister survival

In Models 1 and 2, we test the effects of the type of cabinet unit (regular ministry or presidency's unity) and the profiles of ministers and presidential advisors. As presented before, the variables on the ministers' profile capture individual attributes related to their proximity to the president (own people), their party ties (partisanship), and their expertise in the policy area for which the minister is in charge (expertise).

First, as expected, we did not find evidence that being a presidential advisor makes any difference in terms of a minister's survival. In other words, there is no statistically significant difference in the length of ministerial tenure for regular ministers and presidential officeholders. This result is also demonstrated by Figure 4 below, which shows similar survival rates for both ministerial and presidential officeholders.

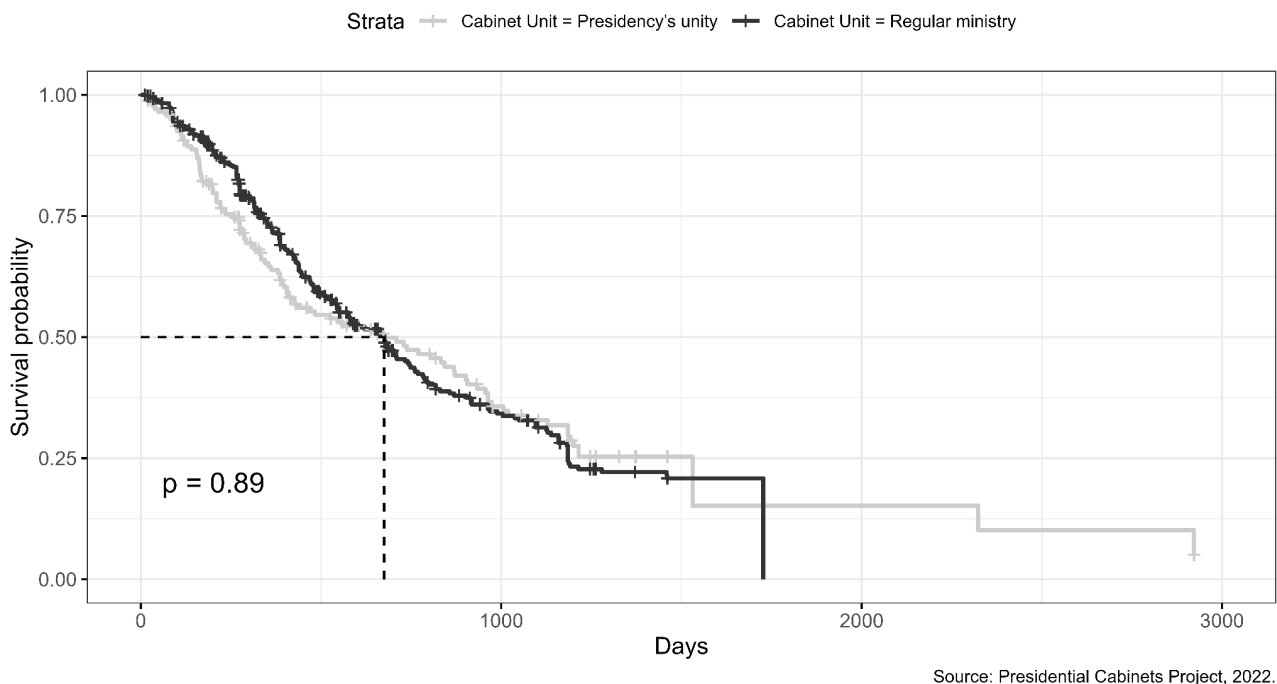


Figure 4. Ministerial Tenure by Cabinet Unit - The Kaplan-Meier Survival Probability.

In model 1, the same can be said for nominees close to the president (Own people): there is no statistically significant difference in the length of ministerial tenure for ministers who are close to the president. Ministers who have high expertise in their respective policy areas are less likely to leave their positions, while those with no or some expertise have higher exit risk. Different evidence occurs with partisan ministers, as we did not find statistically robust results. Unlike model 1, we added the gender variable to model 2 and observed that being a woman in fact reduces the risk of leaving office. However, despite this result, it is worth noting that in our database only 8% of ministers are women.

We added context variables to model 3 to control for a possible bias related to contextual factors that may affect the chances of a minister being fired or not. Knowing the context of ministers' exits (exit's cause) is a critical factor for measuring survival. The results corroborate our hypotheses, reinforcing the effect of internal and external conflicts over ministers' exits, compared to exits at the ends of presidential terms. Exit risk is much higher when there are internal conflicts such as policy divergence and party friction, or external ones such as pressure from scandals, unpopularity, and poor performance by the minister or officeholder. There is relatively less risk of ministers and officeholders leaving

office before the end of their term, even in the absence of conflicts. Removal to other positions, inside or outside the cabinet; resignation, to run for elective office; or other personal reasons are captured by this category (exit: non-conflict). Furthermore, we control for a variable that indicates whether a minister has been reallocated within the cabinet (reallocation), so his or her departure from office is not a leaving of the government. This is important because presidents, whether due to loyalty or competence, can reassign certain ministers to various positions within the cabinet. The findings confirm that ministers who occupy more positions within the same presidency are at greater risk of not surviving.

Finally, in model 4 we consider an interaction term (Cabinet Unit  $\times$  Own people). Although we have not found evidence that cabinet unit and being close to the president affect exit risk separately, the interaction term indicates that ministers who are close to the president are more protected and face less risk of being fired. This result is contrary to our expectations of greater protection for presidential advisors than for regular ministers. However, it should be noted that nominees considered as "own people" include the president's co-partisans, as well as the quota of non-partisans who are allocated to ministries that are programmatically or administratively important to the government, such as economic ministries (Batista 2018).

## Discussion and conclusion

In the present article, we proposed a more comprehensive approach to cabinet politics by addressing the organizational conditions under which the relationship between presidents and ministers takes place. We highlighted the analytical gains from looking jointly at changes related both to ministries and to the presidential organization, focusing on oscillations in the number of units and the survival of their officeholders.

Our results show that the redesign of the cabinet by presidents affects both the structures and positions of the ministries and the presidency. To redesign the cabinet, the presidents do not limit themselves to changes at the ministerial level, but also align their own structures.

We present evidence that the size and internal composition of the cabinet, considering regular ministries and presidency units, varies considerably among

presidential terms in Brazil. The centralization of tasks and responsibilities in the hands of presidential staffing was a relevant strategy on part of the Brazilian presidents in the re-democratization period. However, it is far from being a linear movement of mere expansion of the units of the presidency. On the contrary, the configurations varied, ranging from centralization, with the emptying of the ministries' roles, to a double expansion of the number of ministries and presidential units.

Cabinet redesign also includes changes of ministers and presidential advisors. We show that the exit risk for presidential advisors does not differ, on average, from that observed for ministers. In other words, the presidents reshuffle the cabinets by handing over all the positions, including those of the advisors they, themselves, brought to the presidency. In addition, our findings show that being partisan does not protect all ministers. Longer tenures are observed among ministers from the president's party or from the presidential quota. This confirms the presidents' differential handling of their own party. Their co-partisans, who are appointed to the most salient ministries, retain these positions longer. It is important to investigate further whether the presidential calculation is deferential to the co-partisans or whether, by retaining them, it also seeks to avoid a race by allies for these important ministries.

Expertise seems to be relevant to reducing exit risk, but it loses this effect when internal or external conflicts affect ministers and officeholders directly. Several studies have demonstrated that policy expertise seems to influence the presidential decision about whom to fire. However, presidents seem to have less leeway to retain such ministers and officeholders when pressures from within the cabinet or exogenous shocks hit them. In a nutshell, in bad times, the relative advantages of certain profiles of ministers and presidential advisors are blurred and may put these positions at risk.

An important finding of our analysis is that, even with these conflicts, ministers who are closer to the president are more protected than ministers from other parties and even presidential advisors. Looking at how presidents deal with their "own people" – both their co-partisans as well as non-partisans who are personally close to the president – is an important step in understanding presidential calculations regarding the profiles of different ministers (Inácio, Llanos, and Pinheiro 2022). While studies recognize that appointments of non-partisan ministers are more frequent in presidential systems, little attention is paid to the bond they maintain with the president and how this affects their

survival in the cabinet. Whether the presidential party gets a bonus in portfolio allocation or not has been largely analyzed. This finding indicates the relevance of this analysis for a better understanding of the dynamics of cabinet reshuffles in coalitional presidentialism.

An interesting finding of the present study is the shorter tenures of ministers and officeholders who were fired in order to be reassigned to another ministry or presidency unit. This signals a different ministerial retention movement by the president, which points to different strategies to be pursued through cabinet reshuffling. Ministers who are fired, but not removed from the cabinet, may signal presidential attempts to curb deep cabinet changes. Further analysis is needed on who these circulators are, and why presidents resort to such a strategy.

As we have argued before, presidents organizationally reshape the cabinet to establish the basis for sharing power with other parties, or even with individual ministers. Limiting the analysis of these strategies to changes related to ministries leaves aside the choices that may be the most critical for the president: namely, the place of the presidency within the cabinet. In this article, we seek to take steps forward to overcome such limits.

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## Appendix 1

Table A.1: Cox proportional hazard models of minister survival

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Cabinet Unit	0.86 (0.12)	0.82 (0.12)	0.86 (0.12)	1.38 (0.23)
Own people	0.98 (0.12)	1.03 (0.12)	1.12 (0.12)	1.87** (0.24)
No expertise	1.69*** (0.22)	1.79*** (0.22)	1.30 (0.22)	1.20 (0.23)
Some expertise	1.34*** (0.14)	1.34*** (0.14)	1.01 (0.14)	1.00 (0.14)
Partisan	1.11 (0.13)	1.14 (0.13)	0.97 (0.13)	0.90 (0.14)
Sex: woman		0.60** (0.22)	0.68* (0.22)	0.63* (0.23)
Exit: conflict			17.41*** (0.22)	17.77*** (0.22)
Exit: non conflict			8.98** (0.21)	9.04** (0.21)
Reallocation			2.28*** (0.19)	2.48*** (0.19)
Cabinet Unit × Own people				0.48** (0.28)
Num.Obs.	578	578	578	578
R2	0.017	0.028	0.411	0.418
AIC	3662.5	3658.0	3375.1	3369.9

Confidence intervals of the hazard ratios in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$