



The Partisan Roots of Executive Coups

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Abstract

In recent decades, the free world has witnessed the ascension of a new threat to democracy; Executive Coups. Sometimes characterized as an “autogolpe,” this particular strain of authoritarian action stands apart from its traditional military coup counterpart. Rather, in executive coups, it is the national leader who seizes absolute power from within a democratic system. These types of actions threaten to undermine, if not overturn, many emerging, and established, democracies around the world. Listed below are the key basics for this paper.

- I hypothesize that political partisanship has a direct link to individual tolerance for executive coups
- Leaders with a large base of extreme partisan supporters can feel emboldened to take certain actions they otherwise would not have considered.

Background

The traditional Coup d'état conjures up images from our past that many find familiar; Pinochet's henchmen storming the presidential palace in Santiago, or Soviet tanks rolling into Prague. However, in recent years, it has been increasingly common for coups to originate from within the executive branch.

Scholars have a variety of different perspectives on the issue. Singer (2018) found that citizens who approve of the incumbent government are more likely to approve increased government control; even if by undemocratic means.

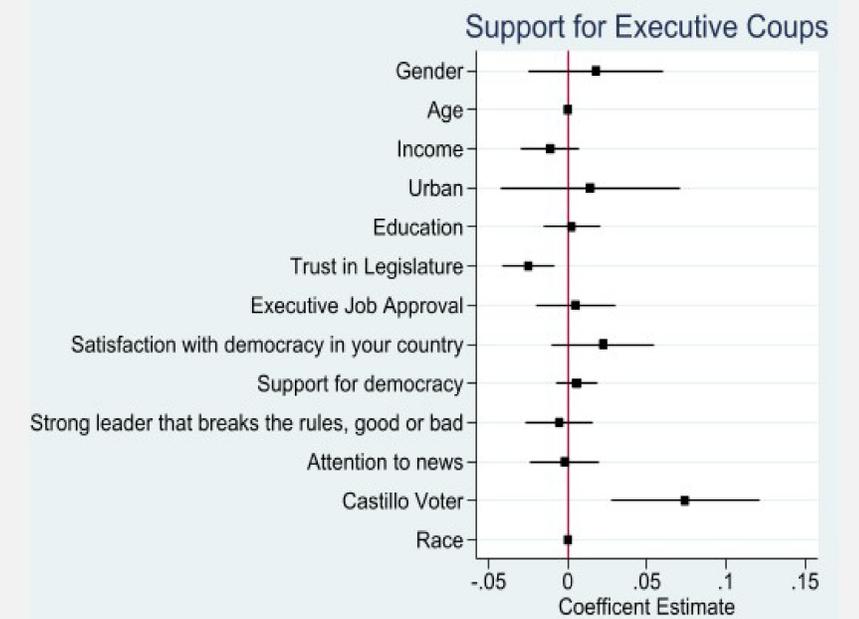
Objectives

To identify and understand the predictors that lead to an individual's tolerance for executive coups.

Methods

- The primary independent variable is a question asking respondents who they voted for in the last presidential election.
- The dependent variable, also measured as a survey question, provides participants with a fictional scenario in which the President has disbanded the legislature, and then asks if such an action is justified. At the time this question was posed, it had only been a few months since former President Castillo had actually attempted an executive coup.
- Two regressions are run for this project; one measures the impact of solely the control variable, while the other introduces all other independent variables. The purpose for this is to compare and contrast how these results differ based on the variables used in the regression. However, it is the last and final regression which reveal the primary findings for the paper.
- These findings are measured using coefficient estimate graphs, which visually represent the statistical significance of the results.
- Data is from the LAPOP LAB AmericasBarometer 2023 survey

Results



- In-line with my hypothesis, the Castillo voters variable has a strong connection. Its p-value for the regression was 0.002; enough to qualify as significant.
- The regression showed that gender and satisfaction with democracy could potentially have a relationship as well, along with urban households and satisfaction with democracy.

Future Directions

Future scholarship on this topic might examine the many mechanisms and motivations that create politically extreme supporters. What separates a regular political participant from an extreme one? What ideological tendencies in a candidate attract those individuals? Now that a relationship between political partisanship and tolerance for executive coups has been established, the dynamics of those people demand further study.