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DICTATORS AS FOUNDING FATHERS? THE ROLE OF CONSTITUTIONS UNDER AUTOCRACY

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This article advances a theory of why autocratic coalitions adopt constitutions. We argue that autocratic rulers adopt constitutions in the nascent stages of an autocratic coalition taking power, when uncertainty about leader intentions is high. Constitutions can serve to consolidate a new distribution of power, allowing a launching organization (LO) to codify and defend their rights. Autocratic coalitions that adopt constitutions should therefore last longer in power than those that do not. Using new data compiled on constitutions created under autocracy in Latin America from 1950 to 2002, we show that autocratic coalitions who adopt and operate under constitutions extend their survival. This result holds after controlling for the presence of other autocratic institutions, country fixed effects, and after using an instrumental variables strategy to address reverse causation. A case study of Mexico details the mechanism by which this relationship between constitutions and stability occurs.

Why do autocrats adopt constitutions? Do their constitutions matter? Dramatic examples of dictators' constitutional failures suggest that they do. In 1953, Colombian dictator Laureano Gómez proposed a new constitution designed to install a fascist regime mimicking Francisco Franco's in Spain. Because it was intended to consolidate the political power of business interests and the Catholic Church over the Liberal Party and popular sectors, it was vehemently opposed. Ultimately, the military overthrew Gómez due to his polarizing policies, before the constitution could be promulgated. In 1980, Uruguay's military Junta drafted a new constitution that was roundly rejected in a 1982 plebiscite. This was a devastating political defeat that persuaded the armed forces to return to the barracks, unexpectedly returning Uruguay to democracy. Even constitutional successes can carry costs. The process of constitutional adoption by a dictator calls for controlling and manipulating constitutional delegates to prevent them from shirking and creating a document that challenges or embarrasses the regime.

Is the fact that autocrats adopt constitutions despite steep costs in resources and effort, at the risk of eliciting a backlash and even their downfall, prima facie evidence that they can serve some important function? Although the motivations driving authoritarian regimes to incur constitutional costs may be varied, the costs might be justified if the ultimate outcome is the consolidation of political authority. Do dictatorships with constitutions reap concrete benefits from them? If so, why?

In the absence of quantitative evidence, researchers have been skeptical that autocratic constitutions matter for outcomes within these regimes. And even if one were to uncover a correlation between constitutions and autocratic survival, such evidence would be insufficient to claim that constitutions have a direct effect on the survival of autocratic regimes not of their indirect effects. That is, it would hardly be surprising

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to learn that authoritarian constitutions might make democratic-like institutions more likely, and institutions such as political parties, legislatures and elections have already been linked to the survival of autocratic regimes (Boix and Svolik, 2008; Gandhi, 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Geddes, 2003; Magaloni, 2008; Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010; Schedler, 2002; Wright, 2008). In this skeptical vein, some scholars argue that the main function of autocratic constitutions is to simply assert that the dictator's authority is supreme and formally and publicly announce his political agenda (Brown, 2002). Others conclude that constitutions fail to serve even these ends, and argue that they are nothing more than window dressing (Posner and Young, 2007).

We argue, by contrast, that although constitutions are just one of several tools – tools that include repression, cooptation, and clientelistic networks – that a dictator may use to consolidate his grip on power, when employed they can be quite useful in protracting his rule. Autocratic constitutions play a critical role in consolidating the inner ranks of the autocratic regime by fostering loyalty and trust between the dictator and his launching organization (LO) early in the regime, when uncertainty about the dictator's intentions is extreme and the LO's de facto power is at its apex. One key function of autocratic constitutions is to consolidate a new distribution of power. To do so, autocratic constitutions may outline limits on executive authority, codify individual rights and political obligations and, under the right conditions, impose real constraints on executive authority. Autocratic constitutions can then serve as coordinating devices for the elites who helped launch the dictator into power. This insight draws from a long line of work on how constitutions can enable political actors to establish mutual expectations and impose self-enforcing limits on executive authority (see e.g. Carey, 2000; Hardin, 1989; Myerson, 2008; Weingast, 1997).

Autocratic constitutions differ in several respects from both democratic constitutions and other autocratic institutions. Autocratic constitutions often aim to eviscerate the power and rights of the group replaced by a new dictatorship. They are designed for a small group of insiders and enforced by those individuals. Autocratic constitutions also tend to create strong executives and weak judiciaries. Although autocratic constitutions share some similarities with other autocratic institutions such as elections, parties and legislatures, these other institutions differ in that they are typically deployed after the initial, consolidation phase of the regime, when uncertainty about the dictator's intentions has subsided and a new breed of problems arise. It is then that both the dictator and his autocratic coalition must together craft a strategy to deal with new, emerging threats from the outside. They must also address crises that may arise within the coalition due to issues such as executive succession.

We test this theoretical framework on a panel dataset of Latin American dictators between 1950 and 2002. We show empirically that constitutions have an independent, causal impact on an autocratic regime's longevity even after controlling for possible indirect pathways such as single party dominance, multiparty elections, and the existence and strength of legislatures. This result also holds after controlling for country fixed effects. Finally, it holds after instrumenting autocratic constitutions with constituent assembly elections held prior to constitutional promulgation.

The article continues as follows. In the first section we review the literature on the political economy of dictatorship, focusing on accountability mechanisms under autocratic rule. The second section provides a theoretical foundation for understanding why autocrats adopt constitutions, arguing that these constitutions aid in formalizing

a new distribution of power and consolidating executive rule. The third section systematically explores the relationship between autocratic constitutions and autocratic regime survival. The fourth section is a case study of Mexico that demonstrates how an autocratic constitution, in conjunction with other institutions, can transform a dictator's launching organization into the new elite. The fifth section concludes.

1. ACCOUNTABILITY AND POWER-SHARING UNDER DICTATORSHIP

It has become common wisdom that many, if not most, autocratic regimes possess some democratic-like institutions such as political parties, legislatures, elections or courts. The first generation of research on this topic grappled with issues of conceptualization, given that these regimes mix authoritarian and democratic elements (Levitsky and Way, 2002). Some researchers have focused on documenting and explaining the resilience of so-called single party regimes (Geddes, 2003; Magaloni, 2008). Others argue that multiparty elections are what help autocratic regimes strengthen their grip on power (Boix and Svolik, 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Schedler, 2002). Still others find that legislatures (Gandhi, 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Wright, 2008) and courts (Moustafa, 2007) may limit a dictator's power and encourage growth. What all of this research shares in common is the idea that repression only goes so far in perpetuating autocratic rule and that elections, political parties, legislatures and courts are tools used by autocratic regimes to co-opt regime opponents and make concessions to regime insiders.

One promising contribution made by recent scholarship is the role played by credible commitments. Although the prototypical autocrat may divide and conquer potential challenger, or terrorize opponents into submission (Acemoglu et al., 2004; Haber, 2006), successful dictators often relegate coercion to a last resort. They instead rely primarily on institutions that help them generate trust. For example, Magaloni (2008) details how elections enable credible power-sharing between the dictator and his ruling coalition. The political leverage of the dictator's core supporters increases because they can threaten to defect from the ruling party and join an opposition party. With a similar focus on credible commitment, Myerson (2008) argues that by introducing or sustaining institutions that make him vulnerable to overthrow, a dictator can cultivate his supporters' trust.

Although a few researchers have argued that constitutions can have an important, independent political impact in autocratic regimes (Barros, 2002; Brown, 2002), there have yet to be any systematic empirical analyses of their effects. Furthermore, perhaps because the dominant view in the literature is that autocratic constitutions are simply window dressing (Posner and Young, 2007) there has been a dearth of theory as to why constitutions might matter. Finally, existing contributions tend to focus on questions of constitutional change and endurance (Elkins et al., 2009), rather than the effect of constitutions on regime duration in autocracies more specifically.

2. THEORY

Uncertainty about leader intentions is often very high at the beginning of a new autocratic regime. This matters most for members of the dictator's launching organization, which is composed of those individuals who help a dictator grab power. The members of the LO can be economic or political elites; they can also be the leaders of the military or larger social groups such as labor unions or peasant organizations. While

the launching organization brought the new leader into power, their rights in the new regime and the tools they can use to defend those rights are undefined. If uncertainty persists and these rights remain undefined, power may shift to the dictator and enable him to betray them. Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003, p. 100) describe this first stage of autocratic rule: "initially an autocrat's coalition is relatively unstable since members fear exclusion. However, as the learning process continues…their fear of exclusion diminishes and the loyalty norm strengthens." But how does this learning process take place?

To assuage the LO the dictator must formally endogeneize their political power by defining who they are, what their rights are, and what tools they can avail to defend their rights and pursue their interests. This means that a dictator must create a stable distributional arrangement and, once this is locked in, credibly commit to protecting the property rights of the members of the LO not only in the present but also in the future, when the identity of the individuals who compose the LO may have changed. All these requirements call for some set of rules and a structure of political authority beyond the raw power possessed by the members of an LO.

Constitutions are one of the key mechanisms whereby the political groups and organizations other than the dictator can codify their rights and interests. These groups will usually push for a constitution *early* in the tenure of a new regime. Why is early adoption most likely? Because shortly after a new dictator comes to power, uncertainty about the dictator's rule is at its height and the LO remains well organized, giving them greater leverage over the dictator. If this window of opportunity passes, it will be more difficult for the LO and other political groups and organizations to use conventional, non-constitutional instruments to influence the politics of the regime. While autocratic institutions adopted later in a dictator's rule are less likely to have leverage over his decisions – unless they are forced upon him during a crisis – the same is not true of a constitution crafted at the beginning of his tenure.

Why is a constitution particularly useful for the LO, rather than an early bid to establish a party or a legislature? The reason is that unlike constitutions, these other institutions take a considerable amount of time to bear fruit. Parties and legislatures that are established at the outset of a regime remain unproven in their capacity to forward the interests of the LO until they are tested, which requires considerable time. The LO will therefore try to rely on the constitution instead of hoping for robust legislatures and courts that may never come. Indeed, the power of parties and legislatures are often derivative: designed by constitutions and implemented according to a timetable outlined by the constitution.

2.1 The Content and Operation of Autocratic Constitutions

The key to establishing a stable distributional arrangement within the regime is to enshrine and enforce LO property rights, incentivizing them to remain loyal to the regime over the long run. A constitution can help accomplish this through several steps. First, clear rules about who qualifies as a member of the ruling group can be established. By identifying regime insiders and making their rights explicit, the constitution can make the boundaries of the ruling group less fluid. This may call for the destruction of a group of pre-existing elites. Second, norms regulating who is entitled to what share of the rents, and the codification of institutions that distribute the spoils of office, can be established. Third, institutions that monitor the ruler's actions to enforce these norms can be established.

A constitution can enable the rise of a new autocratic coalition by weakening or destroying alternative sources of political and economic power. This makes it harder for dictators to betray the LO because it eliminates an outside option that can otherwise be relied upon for support. For example, in 1967 Bolivian dictator Colonel Rene Barrientos used a new constitution to dismantle the mine workers' union, suppress strikes, exile union leaders (legitimizing these actions using Articles 112 and 138) and grant private investors preferential treatment (using Articles 141 and 145). These policies served to severely weaken the political coalition that had supported the government of his predecessor, Paz Estenssoro, whom he had toppled in a coup, and bolstered his reliance upon his LO, composed of rural oligarchs, urban business moguls, and military generals. A similar situation occurred in Mexico under the PRI, which we discuss in detail below in a case study.

One widespread example of how autocratic constitutions can integrate the LO into a dictator's political coalition is by granting the military a special role in the regime's politics. This enables the military to maintain leverage well after any individual dictator loses power. For example, Article 213 of Peru's 1933 Constitution states that "The purpose of the armed forces is to secure the rights of the Republic, the fulfillment of the Constitution and the laws, and the preservation of public order." Ensuing interventions were justified by the Peruvian armed forces on the grounds that it was upholding Article 213. The 1936 election results were annulled by the military. In 1939, several parties were deemed ineligible to compete in the upcoming elections. Finally, Article 213 was also used by the military to justify the coups of 1948, 1962, and 1968. Similarly, in the Honduran Constitution of 1957, Articles 318 through 330 stipulate that the Chief of the Armed Forces would be selected by the military, that his command over the military would supersede the president's, and that he could deny presidential oversight of the military budget. In a similar vein, the Panamanian constitution of 1972 bars the president from either appointing or removing military personnel.

Beyond the initial function of destroying a pre-existing elite from a previous regime and enshrining a new autocratic coalition composed of members of the LO, as well as defining their rights and tools to enforce those rights, autocratic constitutions also typically stipulate how power will be exercised and rotated under the new order. They do this through defining the institutions that will be created and function under the new regime. Explicitly defining the terms of political office and rules of reelection can stabilize the expectations of those empowered in the regime and reduce potential conflict among them. The institutions that distribute power can vary, running the gamut from a clear separation of powers, which many of Latin America's autocratic constitutions have codified, to the concentration of power, such as the case of Panama's 1972 Constitution. The institutions that select executives can also vary. While many autocratic constitutions call for direct presidential elections subsequently rigged to ensure reelection by incumbents, others have used indirect elections such as Brazil's 1964 Constitution and Honduras's 1956 Constitution. Still others have codified electoral formulas and practices that disproportionally favor incumbents, such as Guatemala's 1956 and 1965 Constitutions.

Autocratic constitutions also regulate distribution. There are myriad ways to divide the pie within any political regime: to allocate property rights, distribute rents, and to allocate status and opportunities for upward mobility. In democracies, institutions that define agenda control, gate-keeping power, and veto power mitigate this complexity (Shepsle and Weingast, 1981). The same is not usually true in autocracies. The destruction of the old system of property rights and spoils opens space for a new

arrangement to take its place. For example, Barros (2002) shows how an institutionalized system of divided political authority in Chile's 1980 Constitution allowed the different branches of the armed forces to check the power of General Pinochet through the establishment of a unanimity rule over major decision-making and obedience to a constitutional tribunal, even though its members were appointed by the Military Junta. Taken together, these measures served to bolster both the power and budgets of each branch of the armed forces, guaranteeing a stable distribution of rents for the military generals that made up the LO.

Finally, autocratic constitutions may also include provisions for social and political rights for citizens. Although such provisions vary in scope and detail, they are most typically used for the window dressing function that some attribute to autocratic constitutions more generally (e.g., Posner and Young, 2007). Although we do not examine in depth the reasons for including provisions on citizen rights that are blatantly disregarded, one argument given in the literature is that the obviously false promises of autocrats may serve as an informational signal of the strength of the regime used to demoralize opponents (e.g., James et al., 2011).

2.2 Enforcement of Constitutions under Autocracy

Once the ruling group has been defined and the institutional structure of the regime created, how are autocratic constitutions enforced? First, they help disseminate a predictable sense of how the ruler will deal with future contingencies. They also help endow elites with the ability to monitor the executive's actions in order to enforce the regime's norms. This is done by outlining the political tools elites have at their disposal so that they can explicitly appeal to the constitution if needed. Therefore, an autocratic constitution may allow the members of the LO to coordinate to sanction a dictator by serving as a focal point (see Myerson, 2008; Weingast, 1997).

Autocratic constitutions may not always act alone, however. Instead, they may help complement informal practices and behaviors that regulate the regime's political interactions, enabling the LO to better enforce their rights and privileges than in the absence of a constitution. A codified set of standards of behavior and formal political institutions alongside informal norms may deliver greater benefits to both the dictator and elites than either one in isolation. They specify the details of conduct already regulated by informal norms and pre-existing institutions. Constitutions therefore depend upon a certain degree of trust having been established between the dictator and his support coalition. In this sense they may codify promises or obligations to perform particular actions at a future date under conditions of uncertainty by outlining the range of possible moves and responses by the dictator.

2.3 The Uniqueness of Autocratic Constitutions

Autocratic constitutions differ fundamentally from democratic constitutions. They also differ from other institutions that regulate the behavior of politicians in autocracies such as elections, political parties, and legislatures. We explore each of these differences in turn.

Autocratic constitutions differ in several respects from democratic constitutions. In contrast to many autocratic constitutions, democratic constitutions do not generally eviscerate the power and rights of an incumbent group. And while democratic constitutions are usually concerned with issues that affect the entire citizenry, autocratic

constitutions are designed for a small group of insiders. These insiders are often explicitly empowered through provisions in the constitution to coordinate to enforce their rights in the future, as exemplified in Mexico's 1917 Constitution and Chile's 1980 Constitution. Democratic and autocratic constitutions also differ in the institutional structures they delineate, with democratic constitutions typically having more checks and balances. Autocratic constitutions tend to create strong executives and weak judiciaries. And while legislative power varies, it is typically lower than that witnessed under democracy (Brown, 2002). With respect to civil and political rights extended to citizens, democratic and autocratic constitutions are often similar in content but dramatically different in enforcement: citizen rights are often routinely denied under dictatorship or only selectively protected (Haber, 2006).

There are also several ways in which democratic and autocratic constitutions are nominally similar. Specific provisions for political succession and selection into political offices are often included in autocratic constitutions. And the enforcement of autocratic constitutions is largely similar to that of democratic constitutions: it relies on the coordination of key constituent groups to enforce their rights. Even despite this similarity, however, two key differences remain. The first is that the number of individuals involved in enforcing the constitution in an autocracy is limited to a select few. The second is that the political ramifications of failing to enforce it are quite serious, including the possibility of being permanently frozen out of politics or suffering torture or death.

How are constitutions different from other autocratic institutions such as legislatures, elections, and parties? While autocratic constitutions may share some basic similarities with these other autocratic institutions, key aspects about the timing, function, content, and operation of autocratic constitutions underscore several important differences. Autocratic constitutions play a critical role in consolidating the inner ranks of the autocratic regime by fostering loyalty and trust between the dictator and his launching organization both when uncertainty about the dictator's intentions is at its highest and the LO's de facto power is at its apex.

Other autocratic institutions often serve a different function, once uncertainty about the dictator's intentions has subsided. Once regime insiders have consolidated into a stable autocratic coalition that is loyal to the dictator, they must craft a strategy to deal with new, emerging threats from the outside that take the form of opposition groups and alternative social and economic actors that may challenge the regime. They must also address crises that may arise within the regime due to issues such as executive succession. Elections allow the ruling group to identify opposition forces and their ringleaders (Boix and Svolik, 2008). Once identified, legislatures allow the dictator and LO elites to co-opt these potential challengers (Gandhi, 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007), even giving them a cut of the rents (Lust-Okar, 2006). Political parties may serve the same function for insiders: they can provide stable incentives for key elites to vest their interests in the regime over the longer term, waiting their turn for a likely promotion rather than challenging the regime's existence (Magaloni, 2008).

Other autocratic institutions are often derivative to the constitution. Ultimately, it is the constitution that ensures that LO members will have a seat at the table when crafting the rules that structure these subsequent political institutions, making it more likely that they will occupy key posts in the parties and legislatures. The key difference between constitutions and other autocratic institutions, then, is that while constitutions codify and protect the rights and interests of insiders at the dawn of a new

regime, elections, legislatures, and political parties often address emerging threats and challenges, and are usually sanctioned by both the dictator and LO acting in concert to forestall challenges to their authority.

2.4 Empirical Implications

The theoretical argument indicates that an autocratic constitution can help to ameliorate the uncertainty endemic in the initial stages of a new autocratic regime by establishing rules that will establish the rights and privileges of elites and regulate these interests in the future as the power balance between a dictator and his launching organization may shift. Furthermore, this uncertainty is likely to decline over time as the constitution standardizes expectations between LO elites and gives them a greater stake in the regime. This argument yields two primary empirical implications. First, autocratic constitutions should be adopted at the outset of a new autocratic coalition seizing power. Second, an autocratic coalition that adopts a constitution will be more likely to survive longer than one that does not, *ceteris paribus*. We examine these implications in the empirical section below.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

To test the empirical implications outlined above we embark on a two-pronged strategy. First, we use a panel dataset of Latin American dictator years that includes variables capturing the timing of constitutional adoption and reform, the autocratic coalitions that operated under constitutions and those that did not, and how long autocratic regimes survived. Our main finding is that autocratic coalitions that adopt and abide by constitutions survive in office longer. These results are robust to whether or not we consider gradations of "constitutionalism;" if we alter how we operationalize an autocratic coalition; and if we use country fixed effects and instrumental variables to address potential endogeneity.

The second empirical strategy is to use a case study of Mexico's 71 year dictatorship under the PRI to illustrate the causal mechanisms implied by the theory. We show that a stable distributional arrangement, anchored by well-established rights for regime insiders, were underpinned by an autocratic constitution. This provided the foundation for enduring rule by a single autocratic coalition.

We focus on Latin America given the region's long history of dictatorship and the significant variation in how long autocratic coalitions exercised power. Yet while we focus on Latin America empirically, the theoretical argument is applicable to other settings. One example is new constitutions that are written shortly after developing countries gain independence. Some of these constitutions may have been designed precisely to protect members of the leader's support coalition. Indeed, in Sub-Saharan African countries such as Kenya and Zimbabwe, new leaders depended on the economic cooperation of key groups in civil society that helped launch them into power. Therefore, future research may test the hypotheses proffered herein in those settings.

3.1 Unit of Analysis and Autocratic Coalitions

The primary way in which we operationalize the concept of an autocratic regime is as an autocratic coalition. There are two points to note about autocratic coalitions. First, a coalition tends to outlast individual dictators, as in the case of Mexico under the

single party dictatorship of the PRI, which lasted 71 years and was composed of a series of dictators who held power during 6-year terms. Second, a single spell of autocracy may contain several different autocratic coalitions (e.g., Svolik 2009; Wright, 2008). In Honduras, for example, the post-World War II era witnessed several key changes in the identity, ideology, and policy orientation of the groups who held power under a single autocratic period. Even if a single spell of autocracy is presided over by an uninterrupted chain of military generals, coups and countercoups that replace one general with another often bring to power dramatically different autocratic coalitions, challenging the notion that such an autocratic spell is constituted by a single, coherent autocratic coalition.

We define an autocratic coalition as a set of chronologically contiguous autocrats that are not interrupted by an irregular transfer of power. Using the Archigos dataset Goemans et al. (2009), we code leaders as belonging to the same coalition when there is no interruption caused by a coup, assassination, popular revolt or transition to democracy. We do not consider an incumbent assassinated by an unsupported individual as an interruption. Neither do we consider as interruptions an incumbent who dies in an accident or natural death, is removed in an internal power struggle short of a coup, or is replaced through an election.

Guided by this definition of autocratic coalitions, we constructed a panel dataset of Latin American dictators from 1950 to 2002. Given that there can be changes in the autocratic coalition that holds power within a given year and changes in the dictator chosen to head the coalition, the unit of observation is the leader year. We code leader years as autocratic according to Cheibub and Gandhi (2004), adjusting their coding to the leader year level. To avoid potential bias arising from left-censored data (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 1997) we adjust the tenure and independent variables for autocratic coalitions that seized power prior to 1950 and were still ongoing in this year. The full dataset contains 572 observations for 71 autocratic coalitions. Nested within these coalitions are 135 individual rulers.

We focus on autocratic coalitions rather than autocratic regimes for two reasons, although we confirm further below that our results are robust to using regimes. First, autocratic regimes are treated as a residual category defined and measured by what they are not: the absence of democratically elected leaders. This measure therefore masks considerable heterogeneity among autocratic regimes. Second, there are often coups *within* these autocratic spells, wherein one dictator replaces another unexpectedly and violently, and enshrines a new LO to support his rule. A coup during an autocratic spell may indicate that (a) elites are uniformly opposed to the policies of the current dictator and support an ouster; (b) elites are divided and some subset desires a break with the current dictator, or; (c) the military is acting independent of elites. None of these scenarios supports the notion that the coup plotters are acting simply on behalf of the extant autocratic coalition that preceded the new dictator's rise to power.

3.2 Autocratic Coalition Exits

Autocratic Coalition Exit is coded as a "1" during the leader years in which autocratic coalitions are terminated. Consistent with our operationalization of an autocratic coalition, this variable depends on how one dictator replaces another. A coalition ends when the incumbent in power is ousted irregularly. We therefore code this variable as

a "1" during years when the executive who heads the autocratic coalition is (1) ousted in a coup through the threat or use of force; (2) assassinated; (3) removed in a popular revolt. In addition, Autocratic Coalition Exit is coded as a "1" when there is a transition to democracy.

We code Autocratic Coalition Exit as a "0" in leader years in which the autocratic coalition remains in power. We also code this variable as "0" when the executive that heads the coalition (1) dies from natural causes; (2) dies in an accident; (3) is ousted by a foreign invasion; (4) is assassinated by an unsupported individual (as with Somoza in 1956); (5) the leader is removed in an internal power struggle short of a coup and the institutional features such as a military council or junta persist; or (6) is replaced through peaceful elections.

Although autocratic coalitions are terminated relatively frequently, there is significant variation in the data. An exit is observed in 67 of the 572 observations in the dataset (11.7%). The average autocratic coalition duration is 11.8 years, with a standard deviation of 12.3 years. There are several cases of long-lived coalitions that endured 30 or more years in the dataset: Mexico during the PRI regime, Paraguay under Stroessner, and Cuba under Castro.

3.3 Defining and Coding Constitutions

In defining autocratic constitutions, we follow Elkins et al. (2010) and distinguish constitutions from either amendments or other rules or laws. Constitutions are coded as documents that are (i) explicitly identified as the constitution or fundamental law of a country; (ii) contain explicit provisions that establish it as highest law; and (iii) change the basic pattern of authority by establishing or suspending an executive or legislative branch of government (see Elkins et al., 2010). Data on constitutions are taken from the Comparative Constitutions Project, which codes the formal characteristics of written constitutions for nearly all independent states since 1789 (see Elkins et al., 2010). Because these data are coded at the country-year level, however, we recoded them by leader year for years in which more than one leader was in office using a host of country-specific sources. We code an autocratic coalition as operating under a constitution both the year in which it is adopted and every year thereafter during the duration of the autocratic coalition.

To identify and code autocratic constitutions adopted and operated under by autocratic coalitions we must first identify the autocratic constitutions adopted by individual dictators. We therefore proceed in two steps. First, Table 1 provides an overview of Latin America's autocratic constitutions adopted after 1950, identifying the individual dictators who adopted them and the year in which they were adopted. A supplementary appendix provides notes on the coding decisions we made. There were a total of 34 separate constitutions created under dictatorship in Latin America during the period. In seven cases, constitutional conventions were convoked by a dictator not to consolidate the autocratic coalition's authority but rather explicitly to usher in democratic rule: Guatemala in 1965 under Azurdia and in 1985 under Victores; Honduras in 1982 under García El Salvador in 1983 under Borjo; Peru in 1979 under Bermúdez; Argentina in 1972 under Lanusse; and Uruguay in 1985 under Armalino. We note that although we do not generally consider these as autocratic constitutions, we report and discuss results below that are robust to recoding these as autocratic constitutions. We therefore code 27 constitutional adoptions by dictators during this time period.

TABLE 1 CASES OF AUTOCRATIC CONSTITUTION ADOPTION IN LATIN AMERICA, 1950–2002

Country	Dictator	Constitution year	Type of constitution
Argentina	Lanusse	1972	Democratization
Bolivia	Paz Estenssoro	1961	Autocratic
Bolivia	Barrientos	1964	Autocratic
Bolivia	Barrientos	1967	Autocratic
Brazil	Castello Branco	1967	Autocratic
Chile	Pinochet	1980	Autocratic
Cuba	Batista	1952	Autocratic
Cuba	Batista	1953	Autocratic
Cuba	Castro	1959	Autocratic
Cuba	Castro	1976	Autocratic
Dominican Republic	Trujillo	1955	Autocratic
Dominican Republic	Balaguer	1961	Autocratic
Dominican Republic	Filiberto Bonnelly	1962	Autocratic
Dominican Republic	Bosch	1963	Autocratic
Ecuador	Arosemena	1967	Autocratic
Ecuador	Rodríguez Lara	1972	Autocratic
Ecuador	Poveda Burbano	1976	Autocratic
Ecuador	Poveda Burbano	1978	Autocratic
El Salvador	Osorio	1950	Autocratic
El Salvador	Portillo	1962	Autocratic
El Salvador	Magaña Borjo	1983	Democratization
Guatemala	Castillo Armas	1956	Autocratic
Guatemala	Peralta Azurdia	1965	Democratization
Guatemala	Mejía Victores	1985	Democratization
Honduras	López Arellano	1965	Autocratic
Honduras	Paz García	1982	Democratization
Nicaragua	Somoza García	1950	Autocratic
Nicaragua	Somoza Debayle	1974	Autocratic
Panama	Torrijos	1972	Autocratic
Paraguay	Stroessner	1967	Autocratic
Peru	Morales Bermúdez	1979	Democratization
Peru	Fujimori	1993	Autocratic
Uruguay	Álvarez Armalino	1985	Democratization
Venezuela	Pérez Jiménez	1953	Autocratic

Notes: The table includes all cases of autocratic constitutions adopted from 1950 to 2002 as coded by Elkins et al. (2010) and adjusted to leader years by the authors. There were also five cases of constitutional adoption prior to 1950 for which the autocratic coalition that adopted the constitution continued in power through 1950: Mexico, Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Types of constitutions are as follows. Autocratic: Created by a dictator whose coalition then operates under the constitution; Democratization: Created under dictatorship in order to transition to democracy.

Second, because our empirical strategy focuses not on individual dictators who adopt constitutions but rather on the autocratic coalitions that both adopt and operate under them, we attach the constitutions to specific autocratic coalitions. To calculate the number of autocratic coalitions that operated under constitutions, it is important to distinguish constitutional adoption by individual dictators from an autocratic coalition adopting and operating under a constitution. Therefore, we need to adjust the 27 constitutional adoptions discussed above to address both multiple adoptions and autocratic coalitions that enter the sample with constitutions.

We have seven cases of multiple adoption after 1950, five cases of countries that enter the sample with a constitution adopted previous to 1950, and one case (Nicara-

gua) that fits into both these categories. The seven cases of subsequent constitutional adoptions by the same autocratic coalition after the first constitution were as follows: Bolivia in 1967, Cuba in 1953, Cuba in 1976, the Dominican Republic in 1963, Ecuador in 1978, and Nicaragua in 1950 and 1974. The five cases of autocratic coalitions in our sample that adopted constitutions prior to 1950 and continued in power through this year were Mexico, Bolivia, Venezuela, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In total, therefore, there were 25 unique autocratic coalitions operating under a constitution in our sample. These constitute 35% of the 71 autocratic coalitions observed in the sample. In terms of leader years, there were 328 leader years (57.3%) observed with an autocratic constitution using the narrow coding criteria that excludes the "democratic transition constitutions" and 244 leader years without one (42.6%).

Finally, we note that most autocratic coalitions experienced some measure of constitutional reform under dictatorship short of adopting a full-fledged constitution. Therefore, below we also report and discuss regression results in which we use an ordinal measure of constitutionalism that identifies the degree of constitutional change on a sliding scale. As we will discuss shortly, this measure incorporates constitutional amendments.

4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

4.1 The Timing of Constitutional Adoption

We hypothesize that because constitutions help to weaken a pre-existing elite and empower a new coalition, constitutions are typically adopted shortly after a new autocratic coalition seizes power. The data support this hypothesis. Figure 1 displays a bar plot of the time it takes an autocratic coalition to adopt a new constitution. The *y*-axis depicts the count of the constitutions adopted by autocratic coalitions in Latin America. The *x*-axis depicts the year in office at the time that the coalition adopted the constitution. Most constitutions are adopted early in a coalition's rule. Indeed, adoption drops nearly monotonically with coalition tenure, and only three constitutions were passed after 6 years of a coalition's rule. None were passed after 15 years in office. That the adoption trend in Figure 1 declines with time also suggests that these constitutions may help autocratic coalitions maintain political power, rather than the possibility that it is the coalitions who are able to survive in office who subsequently adopt constitutions.

4.2 The Relationship between Constitutions and Autocratic Survival

What effect does a constitution have on an autocratic coalition's survival? As a first cut, we can evaluate this question by comparing the cumulative sum of autocratic coalition exits to the cumulative sum of coalitions with constitutions. Figure 2 graphs these relationships against time. Both cumulative sums are the differences between the values of the variables and their respective averages.[1] The patterns are consistent with our theoretical expectations. From roughly 1950 to 1965, the proportion of autocratic coalitions with constitutions tended to be *above* their overall average across the full

[1]The cumulative sums are calculated in three steps. First, the average for each variable is calculated across the full sample. Second, the value for each variable is set at zero for 1950. Third, the cumulative sum is calculated by adding to the previous year's cumulative sum the difference between the current yearly value and the average across the full sample.

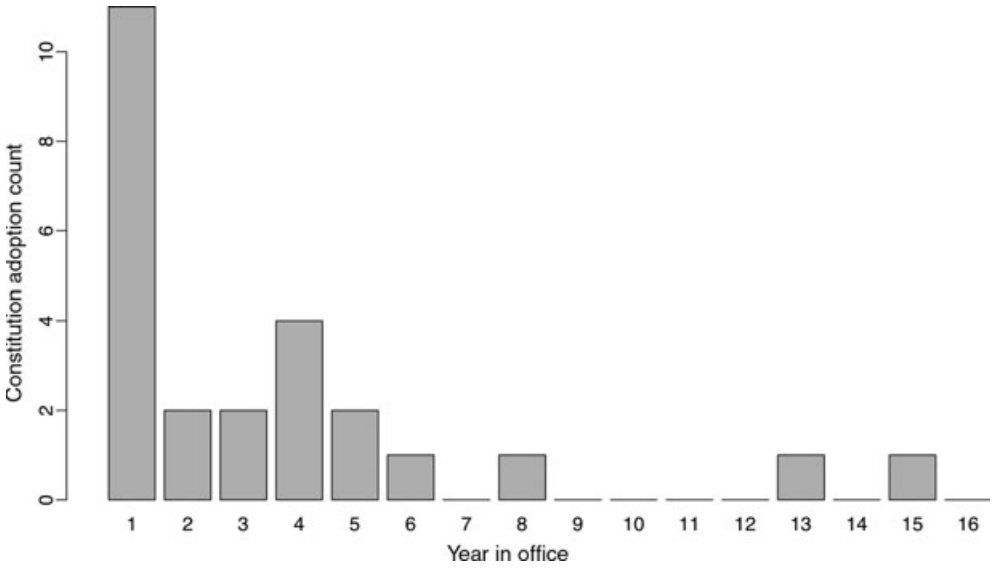

Figure 1. Timing of constitutional adoption by dictators in Latin America, 1950–2002.
Note: The *y*-axis depicts the count of the constitutions adopted by Latin American autocratic coalitions. The *x*-axis depicts the year in power at the time that the coalition adopted the constitution.

sample. Conversely, during the same time period the proportion of autocratic coalitions exiting power tended to be *below* their overall average. Meanwhile, between the late 1960s and around 1975, the direction of both cumulative sums change: a decline in the proportion of autocratic coalitions with constitutions is mirrored by an inverse incline in the proportion of coalitions exiting power. Then, another multi-year surge in autocratic constitutions is shadowed by a simultaneous drop in autocratic coalition deaths. Finally, beginning in the early 1980s there is yet another decline – this time very pronounced and unabridged – in the proportion of autocratic coalitions with constitutions. This change occurs concomitantly with a steady, yet muted, increase in autocratic coalition exits.

Of course, the evidence that when constitutions are more frequent autocratic exits are less frequent is merely suggestive. This negative relationship may be explained by the fact that the simple Figure 2 graph does not control for confounding factors. Some unobserved factor may simultaneously drive both the independent and dependent variables. To address these concerns, we turn to a multivariate analysis in which we control for other determinants of autocratic coalition exits and country fixed effects. We also avail a two-stage estimation strategy, instrumenting autocratic constitutions with constituent assembly elections, to address the possibility of reverse causation. Finally, we also tackle additional concerns about robustness and potential misspecification by measuring the dependent and independent variables in different ways.

The estimation of autocratic coalition exits centers on panel probit models. Robust standard errors are clustered by country to address the correlation between the observations of several variables within the same country; for example, autocratic coalitions

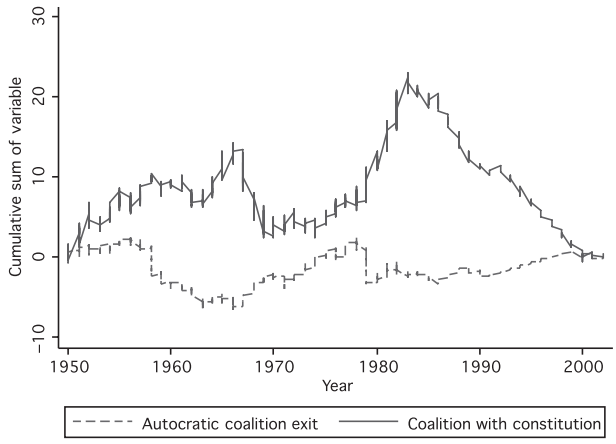

Figure 2. Autocratic constitutions and autocratic coalition failures.
Note: The cumulative sums are the differences between the values of the variables (Autocratic Coalition Exit and Coalition with Constitution) and their respective averages. These are calculated in three steps: first, the average for each variable is calculated across the full sample; second, the value for each variable is set at zero for 1950; third, the cumulative sum is calculated by adding to the previous year's cumulative sum the difference between the current yearly value and the average across the full sample.

in oil-rich Ecuador all evidence high levels of resource reliance.[2] This technique also makes the standard errors consistent in the face of heteroskedasticity. Following Carter and Signorino (2010), temporal dependence is addressed by including Autocratic Coalition Tenure polynomials. We orthogonalize these variables to eliminate multicollinearity.

Table 2, Column 1 is a pooled, baseline model that includes a host of basic control variables. Following Londregan and Poole (1990), we control for Log(Per Capita Income) and the Economic Growth Rate (of Per Capita Income, in percent). We expect a negative sign for both. As per Smith (2004), we control for Total Resources Income Per Capita and also expect a negative sign. Following Londregan and Poole (1990), we control for the coup trap hypothesis – the idea that the incidence of a coup in the near past fosters the reoccurrence of a coup. To operationalize this concept we code a running count of the number of coups based on the Archigos dataset, starting from the earliest available date (1875) or independence. We also control for ongoing Civil War since leader tenure may be reduced by violent rebellions and similar political instability.[3]

Conforming to our theoretical expectations, an autocratic coalition that operates under a constitution is less likely to exit power. This result is highly statistically significant. Holding the continuous covariates at their means and setting civil war to 0, the probability of an exit is reduced by 10% for coalitions that have constitutions.

Figure 3 displays survival estimates for autocratic coalitions that adopt constitutions versus those that do not, after fixing the control variables from Column 1 at

[2]The results hold if we instead cluster the standard errors by year or include year dummies.
[3]See the supplementary appendix for details on the coding and sources for these variables.

Table 2 Duration analyses of constitutions and autocratic exit in Latin America, 1950–2002

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Dependent variable	Coalition exit	Coalition exit	Coalition exit	Coalition exit	Coalition exit	Coalition exit	Regime exit
Coding of Const. variable	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Includes DTC	Excludes DTC
Constitution (binary measure)	−0.567	−0.546	−0.552	−0.99	−1.001	−0.577	−1.005
	[3.03]***	[2.89]***	[1.95]**	[2.70]***	[2.76]***	[2.13]**	[2.80]***
log(GDP per capita)	−0.207	−0.243	−0.375	1.072	0.863	0.898	0.302
	[1.21]	[1.34]	[1.44]	[1.16]	[0.88]	[1.04]	[0.34]
Growth rate	0.012	0.011	0.013	−0.004	−0.003	−0.007	−0.018
	[0.78]	[0.72]	[0.66]	[0.21]	[0.14]	[0.33]	[0.76]
Civil war	0.329	0.334	0.358	0.219	0.211	0.301	0
	[1.40]	[1.37]	[1.29]	[0.52]	[0.50]	[0.72]	[0.00]
Resources income per capita	0.451	0.472	0.69	1.208	1.288	1.118	0.59
	[2.82]***	[2.67]***	[3.98]***	[1.35]	[1.39]	[1.14]	[0.56]
Coup count	0.03	0.029	0.008	−0.195	−0.189	−0.163	0.182
	[1.78]*	[1.71]*	[0.34]	[1.97]**	[1.90]*	[1.90]*	[1.59]
Military regime		0.08	0.138	0.308	0.316	0.413	−0.361
		[0.41]	[0.60]	[1.28]	[1.31]	[1.64]	[0.67]
Single party regime			−1.142	−1.99	−2	−1.782	0.314
			[2.66]***	[4.11]***	[4.24]***	[3.95]***	[0.48]
Multiple parties			0.124	0.657	0.627	0.599	1.025
			[0.49]	[2.45]**	[2.35]**	[2.20]**	[2.68]**
Legislature			−0.371	−0.372	−0.369	−0.411	−0.509
			[2.69]***	[2.58]***	[2.51]**	[2.85]***	[2.42]**
Election previously held			1.144	1.46	1.45	1.45	0.688
			[3.22]***	[3.19]***	[3.16]***	[3.16]***	[1.95]*
Termporal duration controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Country fixed effects	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	543	543	519	519	461	519	494

DTC: Constitutions for Democratic Transition. Model 5 excludes Mexico.
In Columns 1–6, all independent variables lagged except Constitution, Military regime, Single party regime, Multiple parties, Legislature, and Election previously held. In Column 7, all variables lagged. Robust *z*-statistics clustered by year in brackets. Constant estimated but not reported; tenure count polynomials estimated to control for temporal duration but not reported. Country dummies estimated but not reported in FE models.
Significant at: *10%; **5%; ***1% levels.

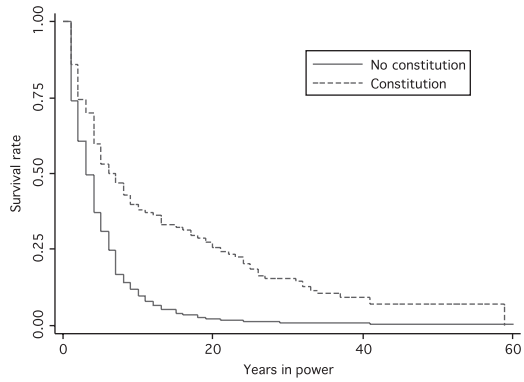

Figure 3. Survival rates for Latin American autocratic coalitions by autocratic constitution. Note: Survival rates calculated after adjusting for log(GDP per capita), Economic Growth Rate, Civil War, Resources Income Per Capita, and Coup Count. The Figure is similar even excluding constitutioned autocratic coalitions with extraordinarily long tenures such as that supporting Castro, Stroessner, the PRI in Mexico, or Pinochet (or all of these simultaneously).

their averages. The cumulative survival rate of autocratic coalitions that have not adopted an autocratic constitution drops below 50% in roughly 3 years, whereas dictators who adopt a constitution only reach this level after 8 years. Furthermore, the survival curve shows an increasing difference in survival rates over time between autocratic coalitions that have adopted constitutions and those that have not. The results are not driven by "constitutioned" autocratic coalitions with extraordinarily long tenures such as the coalition supporting Castro in Cuba, Stroessner in Paraguay, the PRI in Mexico, and Pinochet in Chile. The findings from the survival analysis represented in Figure 3 hold even excluding these long-term autocratic coalitions with constitutions.

Could the omission of a variable that measures military regimes be driving the Column 1 results? Geddes (2003) and Wright (2008) find that military regimes exit more rapidly than other types of leaders. They are also less likely to adopt constitutions. Therefore, in Column 2 we control for whether the autocrat is the head of a Military Regime. We use Wright's (2008) version of this variable, recoding it at the leader year level. Military Regime has the predicted positive sign, but is not statistically significant. The results for autocratic constitution remain almost identical (the marginal effect is now a reduction in the probability of exit by 9.8%). The results do not materially change if we use a more inclusive coding of Military Regime that codes as military any leader coded by Wright as a military hybrid: any blend of military, personalist and single party components (results available upon request).

What about alternative explanations for an autocratic regime's survival whose omission may confound these results? Although some researchers argue that single party regimes last longer than other autocracies (Geddes, 2003; Wright, 2008), others argue that what matters is the presence of multiple parties (Schedler, 2002). Legislatures may also enhance an autocratic regime's survival (see Boix and Svolik, 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Wright, 2008), as may regular elections (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Magaloni, 2008). Therefore, we add several variables that capture these hypotheses to the regression. The first is Wright's (2008) version of Single Party

Regime, which we recode at the leader year level. The second is Multiple Parties, an indicator of whether the autocratic coalition allows other political parties to compete for power. The third is Legislature, an ordinal variable coded as a "1" when the autocratic coalition has a legislature that is appointed, "2" when the legislature is elected, and "0" otherwise (we generate both Multiple Parties and Legislature using Cheibub and Gandhi, 2004; see supplementary appendix). The fourth is Election Previously Held, an indicator of whether a presidential or legislative election was held at any point during the dictator's tenure, which we generate using information from the Nelda elections dataset (Hyde and Marinov, 2012; see supplementary appendix).[4]

In Column 3, we report the results of this regression. Before discussing the results, we note that Autocratic Constitution is correlated with each of these control variables. Its correlation with Single Party Regime is 0.19, with Multiple Parties is 0.49, with Legislature is 0.56 and with Election Previously Held is 0.34. As expected, the regression reveals that Single Party Regimes are more resilient than other types of autocracies. Also, legislatures protract autocratic survival. There is no systematic relationship, however, between the presence of multiple parties and autocratic survival. Finally, elections make it *more* likely that an autocratic coalition will lose power. Unsurprisingly, while autocratic constitutions are still negatively associated with the odds that an autocratic coalition will lose power, the results are somewhat weakened. Autocratic Constitutions is now statistically significant at the 5% level; autocratic coalitions that operate under constitutions are 7% less likely to terminate (after setting civil war and the new controls to zero).[5] One possible conclusion to draw from this exercise is that although a constitution may indirectly affect dictatorial survival by working through ruling parties and legislatures, it also has a direct effect not captured by the typical autocratic institutions and practices identified in the literature on autocratic politics.

Might it be the case that an unobserved, time-invariant factor jointly determines both autocratic constitutions and autocratic longevity? To address this possibility, Column 4 adds country fixed effects. The statistical effect of an autocratic constitution on the duration of an autocratic coalition increases substantially ($p = 0.007$). The log odds also increase vis-à-vis the previous pooled model. Also, Multiple Parties is now statistically significant at conventional levels and associated *positively* with autocratic exit.

Is it possible that Mexico is driving the results? This is perhaps the quintessential case of an autocratic coalition that operates under a constitution. The 1917 constitution was, as will be underscored by the Mexico case study that follows shortly, the linchpin of the country's infamous single party dictatorship. That this is also the longest lived regime in our dataset – lasting 71 years in total and observed from 1950 to 2000 in the dataset – suggests that Mexico could be exerting undue influence on the correlation between constitutions and autocratic survival. To test this we remove Mexico from the regression in Column 5. Despite the fact that the model is reduced to 461 observations, the statistical and substantive significance of autocratic constitution increases slightly.

[4]We also coded a measure for the presence of independent courts, but did not include this measure due to the little variation exhibited in our sample (results were nonetheless robust to its inclusion).

[5]The reduction in the coefficient's significance is partially due to the fact that 24 observations are dropped from the regression due to missing data on the Multiple Parties variable. We note that if we include separate terms for presidential and legislative elections the basic results are unchanged.

TABLE 3 DURATION ANALYSES OF CONSTITUTIONS AND AUTOCRATIC EXIT IN LATIN AMERICA, 1950–2002

Dependent variable	(1) Coalition exit	(2) Coalition exit	(3) Coalition exit	(4) Coalition exit	(5) Coalition exit	(6) Coalition exit	(7) Regime exit
Coding of Const. variable	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Includes DTC	Excludes DTC
Constitution	−0.22	−0.207	−0.315	−0.557	−0.555	−0.418	−0.498
(ordinal measure)	[2.37]**	[2.18]**	[2.01]**	[3.47]***	[3.53]***	[3.09]***	[2.34]**
log(GDP per capita)	−0.104	−0.173	−0.295	1.354	1.16	1.128	0.253
	[0.48]	[0.82]	[1.03]	[1.35]	[1.11]	[1.25]	[0.29]
Growth rate	0.01	0.008	0.01	−0.009	−0.008	−0.009	−0.022
	[0.69]	[0.58]	[0.57]	[0.45]	[0.39]	[0.46]	[0.92]
Civil war	0.429	0.432	0.458	0.391	0.384	0.37	0.045
	[1.92]*	[1.86]*	[1.87]*	[1.09]	[1.07]	[0.96]	[0.09]
Resources income per capita	0.414	0.451	0.662	1.13	1.199	1.071	0.666
	[2.30]**	[2.41]**	[3.55]***	[1.28]	[1.32]	[1.09]	[0.65]
Coup count	0.031	0.029	0.001	−0.195	−0.19	−0.171	0.165
	[1.66]*	[1.54]	[0.03]	[2.17]**	[2.09]**	[2.04]**	[1.45]
Military regime		0.14	0.145	0.246	0.256	0.38	−0.418
		[0.71]	[0.64]	[0.92]	[0.96]	[1.42]	[0.74]
Single party regime			−1.326	−2.055	−2.056	−1.921	0.023
			[2.52]**	[4.44]***	[4.54]***	[4.12]***	[0.04]
Multiple parties			0.142	0.763	0.731	0.658	1.079
			[0.54]	[3.31]***	[3.23]***	[2.66]***	[2.59]**
Legislature			−0.37	−0.347	−0.346	−0.379	−0.515
			[2.60]***	[2.30]**	[2.25]**	[2.52]**	[2.49]**
Election previously held			1.139	1.478	1.465	1.51	0.681
			[3.20]***	[3.22]***	[3.19]***	[3.14]***	[2.05]**
Temporal controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Country fixed effects	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	543	543	519	519	461	519	494

DTC: Constitutions for Democratic Transition. Model 5 excludes Mexico.
In Columns 1–6, all independent variables lagged except Constitution, Military regime, Single party regime, Multiple parties, Legislature, and Election previously held. In Column 7, all variables lagged. Robust *z*-statistics clustered by year in brackets. Constant estimated but not reported; tenure count polynomials estimated to control for temporal duration but not reported. Country dummies estimated but not reported in FE models.
Significant at: *10%; **5%; ***1% levels.

What happens if we recode "democratic constitutions" adopted by dictators as autocratic constitutions? Constitutions adopted explicitly to induce a transition to democracy include Guatemala in 1965 under Azurdia and 1985 under Victores; Honduras in 1982 under García; El Salvador in 1983 under Borjo; Peru in 1979 under Bermudez; Argentina in 1972 under Lanusse; and Uruguay in 1985 under Armalino. In each of these cases, as specified by the constitution, there were free and fair elections shortly after constitutional adoption. And in all these cases Cheibub and Gandhi (2004) code a democratic transition within 1 or 2 years of adoption. Therefore, until now we have coded these as "0" for autocratic constitution. In Column 6, we instead include a version of autocratic constitutions that is recoded as a "1" for these democratic constitutions during dictator years in which they are present. Unsurprisingly, although the autocratic constitutions coefficient is reduced by almost half, it is still statistically significant at the 0.03 level. The choice to treat these constitutions differently is not driving the results.

TABLE 4 DURATION ANALYSES OF CONSTITUTIONS AND AUTOCRATIC EXIT IN LATIN AMERICA USING INSTRUMENTAL VARIABLES (IV), 1950–2002

Dependent variable	Model 1, Stage 2 Coalition exit	Model 1, Stage 1 Constitution	Model 2, Stage 2 Coalition exit	Model 2, Stage 1 Constitution	Model 3, Stage 2 Coalition exit	Model 3, Stage 1 Constitution	Model 4, Stage 1 Coalition exit	Model 4, Stage 2 Constitution
Coding of Const. variable	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Includes DTC	Includes DTC	Excludes DTC	Excludes DTC	Includes DTC	Includes DTC
Constitution measure	Binary	Binary	Binary	Binary	Ordinal	Ordinal	Ordinal	Ordinal
Constitution	−2.996		−2.491		−1.529		−1.301	
	[4.1 2]***		[4.93]***		[4.50]***		[5.69]***	
Constituent assembly election		0.365		0.354		0.722		0.732
		[2.62]***		[2.75]***		[2.43]**		[3.14]**
log(GDP per capita)	1.679	0.252	0.257	1.524	2.006	0.638	1.727	0.567
	[1.98]**	[1.35]	[1.94]*	[1.32]	[2.00]**	[1.38]	[1.24]	[2.00]**
Growth rate	0.008	0.006	0.004	0.005	−0.001	0.007	−0.003	0.007
	[0.39]	[1.85]*	[0.18]	[2.00]**	[0.07]	[1.14]	[0.17]	[1.26]
Civil war	−0.115	−0.111	−0.029	−0.127	0.349	0.086	0.27	−0.016
	[0.26]	[1.23]	[1.68]*	[0.07]	[1.16]	[0.43]	[0.83]	[0.10]
Resources income per capita	0.727	−0.08	0.599	−0.093	0.646	−0.19	−0.163	0.633
	[0.81]	[0.56]	[0.54]	[0.56]	[0.79]	[0.63]	[0.60]	[0.52]
Coup count	−0.258	−0.025	−0.194	−0.018	−0.248	−0.045	−0.203	−0.038
	[3.06]***	[1.10]	[0.76]	[2.42]**	[1.04]	[3.42]***	[0.87]	[2.83]**
Military regime	−0.22	−0.16	−0.171	−0.039	−0.352	−0.296	−0.006	−0.319
	[0.48]	[1.35]	[1.24]	[0.08]	[1.23]	[0.53]	[1.03]	[0.01]
Single party regime	−2.309	−0.209	−2.061	−0.197	−0.824	−2.802	−0.786	−2.605
	[5.46]***	[1.47]	[1.39]	[5.06]***	[5.82]***	[3.44]***	[3.52]***	[5.83]**
Multiple parties	0.876	0.184	0.834	0.202	1.081	0.494	0.942	0.476
	[3.22]***	[1.78]*	[1.87]*	[3.05]***	[2.40]**	[5.34]***	[2.19]**	[3.92]***
Legislature	−0.269	0.016	0.006	−0.311	0.095	−0.168	0.082	−0.22
	[1.15]	[0.32]	[0.10]	[1.58]	[0.90]	[0.68]	[0.74]	[1.04]
Election previously held	1.341	0.026	1.447	0.062	0.017	1.301	0.066	1.479
	[2.79]***	[0.58]	[1.24]	[3.13]***	[0.18]	[2.61]***	[0.69]	[3.10]***
Temporal controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	519	519	519	519	519	519	519	519

DTC: Constitutions for Democratic Transition.
All independent variables lagged except Constitution, Military regime, Single party regime, Multiple parties, Legislature, Election previously held, and Constituent assembly election. Robust *z*-statistics clustered by year in brackets. Constant estimated but not reported; tenure count polynomials estimated to control for temporal duration but not reported. Country dummies estimated but not reported in FE models.
Significant at: *10%; **5%; ***1% levels.

What happens if instead of estimating the relationship between autocratic constitutions and the termination of autocratic coalitions we treat the dependent variable as the end of an autocratic spell? In Column 7, we return to excluding the seven democratic constitutions outlined above and recode constitutions according to whether the entire autocratic spell is observed as operating by a constitution or not. Because the end of an autocratic spell is logically equivalent to the transition to democracy, we employ Cheibub and Gandhi's (2004) binary measure of democracy, Regime, to estimate static Markov Chain transition model in which variation in the covariates of interest measured in $t - 1$ can be mapped onto the probability of a change from an autocratic equilibrium in $t - 1$ to a democratic equilibrium in t. We continue to add the same set of control variables and include country dummies. The results are strengthened. Autocratic periods in which there is a constitution are strongly associated with lower odds of autocratic breakdown, a result that is highly statistically significant ($p = 0.005$).

Alternative mechanisms for constitutions promoting autocratic survival Other mechanisms may link constitutions to the survival of an autocratic coalition besides the intra-elite role played by constitutions in generating trust and loyalty between a dictator and his LO. Two of these alternative mechanisms may work in favor of promoting autocratic survival: (1) an attempt to legitimize the regime to the citizenry in the face of popular opposition; and (2) an attempt to appease the military. To address the first alternative, we experimented with several variables that capture the degree of popular opposition that may pressure elites to heed demands for greater political and civil rights. To address the second alternative, we controlled for military size, which captures the strength of the military and their ability to gain political concessions. The results hold even after controlling for these alternative mechanisms, bolstering confidence in our proposed mechanism (results available upon request).

There is one final alternative mechanism that may lead to constitutional adoption yet threatens the survival of the regime: foreign pressure to liberalize the regime by threatening to withdraw aid or funding. This last alternative mechanism, however, biases *against* our finding, suggesting that the salutary effect of autocratic constitutions on autocratic survival may actually be stronger than reported herein.

Degrees of "constitutionalism" and autocratic survival How would the Table 2 results be affected if we measured autocratic constitutions differently? Thus far we have operationalized an autocratic constitution as a binary variable: when an autocratic coalition (or autocratic spell) is observed as adopting and operating under a constitution, this variable is coded as a "1." We now turn to a series of regressions in which we instead measure the degree of constitutionalism. This measure better captures the fact that there are varying degrees of ownership over autocratic constitutions. Moreover, variation in ownership should map onto variation in how constitutions impact autocratic survival through their content, operation, and enforcement. As ownership ranges from constitutional adoption, to the active amendment of an extant constitution, to the passive inheritance of a constitution from a previous regime, we expect the constitution's effectiveness to weaken. Our ordinal measure of autocratic constitutions is therefore coded as a "0" when there is no constitution, which means that an autocratic coalition actively suspends the extant constitution; a "1" if an autocratic coalition inherits a previous leader's constitution without modifying it; a "2" if an

autocratic coalition inherits and amends a constitution or adopts an interim constitution; and a "3" if an autocratic coalition rewrites and operates under a new constitution (which also includes constitutions that are reinstated).

In Table 3, we reproduce the same approach pursued in Table 2. The only difference is that we now use the ordinal measure of autocratic constitutions described above instead of the binary measure. Column 1 is the baseline model, where we include the basic control variables. In Column 2, we add Military Regime. In Column 3, we add the alternative explanations for autocratic survival from the recent literature on autocratic politics and institutions, including Single Party Regime, Multiple Parties, Legislature and Elections Previously Held. In Column 4, we add country dummies. In Column 5, we remove Mexico from the regression. In Column 6, we reincorporate the Mexico observations and recode the seven democratic constitutions discussed earlier as autocratic constitutions – consistent with the coding rules outlined above these are considered a new constitution and given a value of "3." In Column 7, we return to using the ordinal version of autocratic constitution that excludes the democratic constitutions but that treats the dependent variable as the termination of an autocratic spell instead of an autocratic coalition exit. Although the results are highly statistically significant across the models, the magnitude of the results strengthens. For example, setting the covariates in Column 2 at their means and both civil war and military regime as "0" yields the following marginal effects: moving from a "0" for ordinal autocratic constitution to a "1" decreases the probability of autocratic exit by 5%; and moving from a "0" to a "3" decreases the probability by 12%.

Robustness to endogeneity in constitutional adoption Could there be reverse causation running from autocratic survival to constitutions? Specifically, could it be the case that it is the autocratic coalitions with greater political stability can afford to adopt a constitution and operate by it? To address this concern, we turn to an instrumental variable (IV) approach designed to capture the exogenous variation in constitutions. A valid instrumental variable must satisfy the exclusion restriction: its effect on the dependent variable of interest should work exclusively through the potentially endogenous right-hand side variable. In this case, the instrument must be correlated with the dependent variable in a first stage regression, autocratic constitution, but not correlated with the error term of a second stage regression, where autocratic coalition exit is the dependent variable.

One good candidate for such an instrument is whether or not the dictator at the helm of an autocratic coalition holds elections for a constituent assembly. The reason this is a good instrument is that there is no guarantee that such an election will actually usher in a new constitution – let alone one that will persist across the duration of the autocratic coalition. Indeed, several examples from Latin America evidence that the success of constitutional assemblies convoked by dictators do not necessarily yield constitutions.

An example of this is Venezuela's 1952 constituent assembly elections. That year, a military junta that had been in power for three years held elections for a constituent assembly that was charged with drafting a new constitution and choosing a provisional president. This was a calculated gamble by the junta in the face of strong opposition to the regime and its policies. In the lead up to the elections, the military assassinated dissident army officers and others opposed to military rule. It also jailed approximately 4,000 citizens. Two million votes were cast in the presidential election

that followed and it was won by the leader of an opposition party, Jovita Villalba of the Union Republicana Democrática (URD). The result was unexpected – and proved intolerable to the regime. The head of the junta, Pérez Jiménez, ignored the results of the election and proclaimed himself president. He then banned opposition parties. The constituent assembly finally met in 1953 and ratified Jiménez's presidency; it also replaced elections for governors with presidential appointments filled by Jiménez's cronies and introduced indirect elections for the presidency. Jiménez's political coalition then remained in power another 6 years. In short, the transition from constituent assembly election to a constitution that could help the autocratic coalition consolidate its power was neither smooth nor inevitable.

We code a dummy variable that indicates whether an autocratic coalition holds an election for a constituent assembly intended to draft a constitution. It is coded as a "1" in years where an election was held during the autocratic coalition's tenure and subsequent years until the end of the autocratic coalition. Following the logic above, this coding does *not* depend on whether constituent assembly elections are followed by an actual constitution. Data on constituent assembly elections after 1945 are taken from the Nelda dataset (Hyde and Marinov, 2012). To identify constituent elections before 1945 we use primary and secondary sources. As with the variable for previous elections held, we adjust this variable from country-year format to leader year format using the Archigos dataset.

In keeping with the logic of the regressions reported above, we generated two different instruments. The first version of constituent assembly elections excludes those elections convoked explicitly to set up a timetable to transition to democracy. The second, more inclusive version includes these constituent assembly elections. For the first version we identified a total of 10 constituent assembly elections. This translates into 121 leader year observations (21.1%) in which an autocratic coalition is observed as having had a constituent assembly election. For the second version we identified a total of 15 constituent assembly elections, which translates into 137 leader year observations (23.9%).

In Table 4, we report the results of a series of IV probit models.[6] We reproduce both the first and second stage regressions for each model (the second stage is reported on the lefthand side and the first stage is reported on the righthand side). In Model 1, the dependent variable in the first stage regression (Column 2) is the binary version of autocratic constitution. The excluded instrumental variable is the version of constituent assembly elections that excludes "democratic" constituent assemblies. Following convention, we also include all of the controls used in both Tables 2 and 3, including country dummies. As theorized, constituent assembly elections are positively associated with autocratic constitutions. This correlation is highly statistically significant ($p = 0.009$). The dependent variable in the second stage regression reported in Column 1 is autocratic coalition exit (as in Tables 2 and 3). Here we confirm our previous, non-IV results: holding all else equal, autocratic coalitions protract the survival of autocratic coalitions. The results are highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

[6]Because there is no IV estimator for a dichotomous dependent variable in the first stage – in this case autocratic constitution – when the error term is heteroskedastic, we estimate our first stage models via OLS in Models 2 and 3 despite the fact that the dependent variable is a binary variable. Therefore, we estimate linear probability models with robust standard errors clustered by country that provide consistent estimates. The implication is that the parameter estimates for the first stage cannot be interpreted in terms of log odds or probabilities.

We now turn to three robustness checks. In Model 2, the dependent variable in the first stage regression is the more inclusive autocratic constitution measure, which includes the seven constitutions intended to induce a transition to democracy. Accordingly, the instrumental variable of interest is the more inclusive version of constituent assembly elections that includes constituent assemblies convoked to usher in democratic transitions. Constituent assembly election is again positively associated with autocratic constitution ($p = 0.006$). The dependent variable in the second stage regression is again autocratic coalition exit. As previously, Column 3 indicates that autocratic constitutions protract the survival of autocratic coalitions ($p < 0.001$). In Model 3, the dependent variable in the first stage regression is the exclusive version of the ordinal constitution variable used in Table 3. The excluded instrumental variable is again the exclusive version of constituent assembly election, coding as a "0" the constituent assembly elections intended to help bring about a democratic transition. In the second stage regression (Column 5) we learn that even if measured as an ordinal variable, autocratic constitutions reduce the odds that an autocratic coalition will exit power. Finally, Model 4 uses as a first stage dependent variable the more inclusive version of the ordinal constitution variable, which codes as a "3" the constitutions adopted to orchestrate a transition to democracy. Accordingly, the excluded instrumental variable is the more inclusive version of constituent assembly election that codes as "1" the five constituent assemblies intended to induce transitions. This coding change does little to change the results in the second stage regression. Although the magnitude of autocratic constitution is somewhat weakened, there is still a negative, highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) association between this variable and autocratic coalition exit.

In sum, Tables 2–4 demonstrate that constitutions under dictatorship are linked to longer tenure in office followed by a peaceful exit. We argue that this is due to the value of constitutions as powerful coordinating devices for the elites who helped launch the dictator into power. Autocratic constitutions can enable key political actors to establish mutual expectations over what constitutes proper action and can help impose self-enforcing limits on executive authority when pre-existing informal norms and institutions are already in place. We now turn to empirically evaluating the mechanisms that bring this outcome about.

5. CASE STUDY: THE MEXICAN CONSTITUTION

Mexico provides an illustrative example of how an autocratic constitution can emerge and help enshrine the rights and interests of the LO. In the case of Mexico, the constitution helped consolidate an equilibrium that outlasted the "founding fathers" of the constitution. While the first few dictators to rule under the 1917 constitution continued to fight against a group of powerful economic actors who were holdovers from the previous regime, the document helped the members of the LO to eventually defeat the old guard and then coordinate to enforce their rights for decades. Subsequently, a string of dictators from Mexico's PRI (Institutionalized Revolutionary Party) ruled under the 1917 constitution for over 70 years, rotating office peacefully and presiding over a period of sustained economic growth that set in as the LO was progressively consolidated.

The beginning of the monopolization of power by the PRI can be traced back Venustiano Carranza, who co-opted the key warlords fighting in Mexico's civil war

through a new constitution. From 1915 to 1917, Carranza, an erstwhile politician during the reign of Porfirio Díaz whose faction was led militarily by General Alvaro Obregón, fought a war of attrition against an alliance of Villistas and Zapatistas. Zapata and his peasant followers demanded the return of lands taken from them by large landowners during Díaz's regime. Villa and his supporters sought control of the central government in order to control the sizable rents associated with holding power, and also represented organized labor. Carranza's militias eventually vanquished Villa and Zapata. He then attempted to co-opt his enemies politically. He persuaded many of the peasants allied with Zapata to switch sides by promising them land, and he persuaded many of the industrial workers and miners to join his ranks by negotiating labor-friendly pacts with them that promised progressive social reforms.

To win these groups over and to cement them in his autocratic coalition while destroying the powerful pre-existing elite created under Díaz, Carranza convoked a constitutional convention in 1916. The assembly produced a veritably socialist document. In doing so, it made explicit key members of the ruling group's LO: the peasants and organized labor. It also helped weaken, if not destroy, important members of the preexisting elite: landed oligarchs and foreign investors.

Article 27 of the (new) Mexican Constitution modified land, water, and subsoil property rights. Private ownership of these assets was now a privilege that the government could give and take away at its discretion. Indeed, Article 27 prescribed that large private farms had to be broken up into smaller parcels distributed to peasants. Meanwhile, Article 123 gave the government vast regulatory authority over labor, restructuring the relationship between employers and employees to favor the latter. First, it guaranteed workers the right to organize and strike. Second, it introduced an eight-hour workday and a six-day workweek. Third, it established occupational health and safety standards. Fourth, it made it very difficult for workers to be fired. Finally, it boosted wages by mandating a legal minimum wage, overtime pay, and profit sharing.

However, the pre-existing elite was so strong after Díaz that Carranza's successors faced challenges destroying remaining elements of the old guard and deepening the consolidation of their LO. Carranza, who survived in office longer than the previous five presidents since Díaz's fall in 1911, was ultimately assassinated by his leading general, Álvaro Obregón. Obregón took power in 1920 and immediately sought to consolidate his rule by courting Mexico's most important national labor organization (CROM) and militias composed of landless peasants under the 1917 constitution. This enabled Obregón to finish his term, and the CROM's chicanery helped Obregón's hand-picked successor, Plutarco Calles, steal the presidential election in 1924.

Calles further consolidated the LO he received from Obregón by sending peasants, labor, and military officers a costly signal that he would side with them and become politically reliant on them during his tenure: he dealt a final blow to the elites that had become powerful under Díaz and had evaded the expropriations of Carranza and Obregón. Calles began to seriously implement agrarian reform by distributing some 3.2 million hectares of land during his official term (1924–1928), under the auspices of Article 27 of the 1917 constitution. Using the same constitutional authority granted by Article 27, he also limited the latitude and revenues of foreign oil companies in favor of Mexican nationals through the Petroleum Law and Land Law. Furthermore, Calles was the first Mexican president to tax the rich by adopting progressive income taxation, and was targeted at weakening the pre revolutionary elites to the benefit of the LO. The Tax Law of February 21, 1924

instituted a federal income tax on individual income and corporate profits. This legislation followed the progressive spirit of the constitution. Finally, to cement his political support among labor, Calles appointed the CROM leader as head of Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor. Increases in wages and benefits for CROM workers followed subsequently. These were legitimized by Article 123 of the constitution.

At the end of his presidential term in 1928, Calles helped former president General Alvaro Obregón steal the election. However, Obregón was assassinated by a Catholic fanatic before he could retake office. Calles responded shrewdly: instead of openly protracting his own term, and risk catalyzing opposition, he handpicked one of his supporters to serve as interim president until 1930. This ushered in a de facto extension of the Calles dictatorship known as the *Maximato*: for the following six years, Calles manipulated Mexican politics by controlling three "presidents" (Gil, Ortiz Rubio and Rodríguez) who were, for all intents and purposes, his puppets.

How did Calles consolidate his power? He fashioned a corporatist arrangement among his LO to convey a credible commitment to asset holders that their property rights would be (selectively) protected by the government at the expense of broader property rights for the majority of the population (Haber et al., 2003). Calles also founded the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) in 1929. In founding this party, Calles included influential generals, regional elites, agrarian bosses, labor bosses and the heads of small parties. These elites brought their vast networks of supporters along with them into the party. Henceforth, the official party of the "revolutionary" regime served as Mexico's hegemonic political organization. A system of corporatized bargaining was set up to adjudicate disputes between sectoral representatives (Huntington 1968). The party was renamed the PRI and funnelled patronage to its members in a systematic way according to their rank within the party. Party funds flowed from the bottom to the top, channelled up from the sector level to the national party. This served to reinforce the party's hierarchical structure. Furthermore, Calles's post revolutionary economic system was solidified via the selective granting of property rights to privileged supporters. This equilibrium remained robust until 1982, when the executive began to violate the property rights of key members of its autocratic coalition in the wake of a fiscal crisis induced by Mexico's sovereign debt default, sowing the seeds of its own destruction. In 2000, Mexico transitioned to democracy.

5.1 The Role of the Mexican Constitution and the PRI in Autocratic Longevity

The regime's official party, the PRI, was the longtime instrument that funnelled benefits to the members of the launching organization. Yet this arrangement was far from predetermined at the outset of the regime founded on the heels of the 1910 Revolution. In fact, the establishment and success of the PRI was only possible because of the initial empowerment of the members of the launching organization as they became integrated into the autocratic coalition. These groups used their de facto power to push for a constitution and then reinforced their position within the regime through the constitution (Haber et al., 2003). One way in which they did so was by using the constitution to set up a system of rent generation, as discussed above. The party later

served as a place that housed the members of the autocratic coalition and as a way to distribute those rents.

The constitution, then, was critical in first enshrining the key groups that would be included in the regime and codifying their rights and interests so that future policies and institutions would favor them. This is true despite the high frequency of amendments to the document. In fact, every Mexican president that ruled under the PRI dictatorship authored several amendments to the constitution, sometimes stoking contention. That these presidents chose to spend precious political capital modifying the constitution as the mechanism for orchestrating policy change speaks to its effectiveness. As challenges and opportunities for the regime arose, key members of the autocratic coalition, the successors of the post revolutionary launching organization, were able to position themselves as policy gatekeepers by requiring that reforms stem from constitutional change.

6. CONCLUSION

Why do autocratic rulers adopt constitutions? This is especially puzzling given recent research that voices skepticism that these documents matter for outcomes in authoritarian regimes. We argue, however, that constitutions can serve a critical function in the nascent stages of an autocratic coalition taking power, when uncertainty about leader intentions is high. Whereas the launching organization brings a new leader into power, their rights in the new regime and the tools they can use to defend those rights are undefined. If uncertainty persists and these rights remain undefined, power may shift to the dictator and enable him to betray them. Constitutions can serve to consolidate a new distribution of power within the inner ranks of the autocratic regime, and cement in the launching organization's role in the policies a dictator pursues in the future, allowing them to codify and defend their rights. In doing so, they can create more stable autocratic coalitions that are likely to persist in power longer.

Using new data compiled on constitutions created under autocracy in Latin America from 1950 to 2002, we show that autocratic coalitions who adopt and operate under constitutions extend their survival. This result holds after controlling for single party regimes, party competition, legislatures, elections, country fixed effects, and after using an instrumental variables strategy to address reverse causation. While we find that constitutions matter for at least one important outcome under autocracy, political survival, our theory suggests that they may also impact other political economy outcomes such as social policy and development. Future research might investigate whether these or other outcomes are an outgrowth of autocratic constitution making.

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