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# Democratic elites' democratization process Survivors' continuity subnational through

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## Abstract

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This paper investigates subnational elites' continuity in politics even though regimes change by analyzing the careers of state legislators in the first democracy (1945-1964) that were able to return or continue in the democratization started in the 1980s. From 1.152 state deputies analyzed, only 146 politicians were able to hold any political office again. Why legislators continued in politics? Utilizing a career approach, the results indicate that positions toward dictatorship were relevant in the 1980s, as those who supported dictatorship had more difficulty than those who were opposed. However, some politicians aligned with the military achieved long careers. Other elements also influenced political trajectories, such political support networks. The analysis contributes to demonstrating the role of political elites in the consolidation of Brazilian democracy by analyzing the trajectory of state deputies in different regimes.

**Keywords:** Parliamentary Career. Political Elites. Regime Change. Democratization.

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## I. Introduction

The twentieth century in Brazil was marked by the alternance between democratic and authoritarian periods. The first democratic period began in 1945, following the end of the civilian dictatorship (*Estado Novo*) established in 1937. The democracy of 1945-1964 was interrupted by a *coup d'état*, which ushered in a military dictatorship (1964-1988). In the military regime, the opposition was not treated in the same way as supporters of the military regime; opponents lost their mandates and political rights, there were political murders, and political exile. The process of democratization in the 1980s was based on the slow and gradual opening of the regime.<sup>1</sup>

Subnational political elites emerged as a relevant pressure group during Brazil's democratization process. State legislative and executive bodies actively contested the military regime. This active contestation resulted in the temporary closure of some state legislatures. Subnational units lost their freedom to directly elect representatives in 1966. Competitive elections returned when municipalities and states held elections to directly elect representatives in 1982. However, the military regime managed to restrict participation in certain offices. Despite public mobilization for a direct presidential election since 1983, Brazilians could only participate in their first direct presidential election in 1989.

Subnational actors regularly participate in politics in the Federation; thus, this political move was not surprising. Given the fact that Brazil has been a Federation since 1889, dynamics among federal units have undergone competition among states, and they can support or oppose to the federal government. In fact, agreements among state elites have even culminated in regime change, as exemplified by the Revolution of 1930. In the current

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1 Created by President General Geisel (1975-1979).

democratic period, regional political balance in the federal government promotes governmentality in coalition presidentialism (Abranches, 1988). Thus, as a crucial locus of opposition and because democratization started at the subnational level, it is important to understand the role of subnational elites. However, studies of elites and regime change have usually overlooked this perspective (Codato *et al.*, 2016; Perissinotto; Massimo; Costa, 2017).

This paper investigates subnational elites' continuity in politics even though political regimes change by analyzing the careers of state legislators in the first democracy that were able to return or continue in the democratization period that started in the 1980s. From a database of 1.152 state deputies from seven states (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Bahia, Ceará e Goiás) that held a mandate from 1947 to 1963, only 146 politicians were able to hold any political office once again in the 1980s. Even though political rights revocation, political murders, and forced exile were imposed by the military dictatorship, 146 politicians continued their political careers after the 1980s democratization. Why legislators continued in politics? Would the 146 politicians have similar characteristics like profiles, social backgrounds, and political positions regarding democracy or dictatorship?

Analyzing the careers of legislators offers valuable insights into the process of democratization. This approach to empirical research involves verifying legislators' level of education, occupational background, gender, whether they belong to a political family, and political support. Investigating legislators' profiles and their ideological ideas can reveal potential threats to democracy. This research is fundamental to a comprehensive understanding of democracy, and a long-term perspective is necessary to fully grasp this relationship (Cotta; Best, 2007).

The political trajectories of state deputies offer a unique opportunity into understanding the relationship between elites, regime change, and democratic stability. This analysis sheds light on how skilled politicians survived arduous institutional contexts while other politicians failed to achieve the same objective. The sample includes prominent figures from Brazilian history, such as presidents João Goulart, Jânio Quadros, and president elected

Tancredo Neves; Governor Leonel Brizola; ministers; Senate President Auro Moura Andrade; Chamber of Deputies President Ernesto Pereira Lopes; key democratization leaders like Ulisses Guimarães and Paulo Bossard; local successful politicians like Antônio Carlos Magalhães; and professional politicians like Bonifácio de Andrada. Results indicate that position toward military regime was a key factor in democratic times, as those who supported dictatorship had more difficulty than those who were opposed. However, some politicians aligned with the military achieved long and successful political careers.

The article comprises four sections. The next section provides a review of the literature and presents the hypothesis of the study. Subsequently, the methodology and research design are explained. Section IV presents the data and discusses the findings. In the conclusion, a summary of the findings is presented, clarifying that opposition to military regime was more successful during the democratization of the 1980s.

## **II. Elites and political regimes change**

Studies on parliamentary careers have been conducted in various nations, taking into account factors including political professionalization, sociological characteristics of legislators, and historical developments of parliamentary elites. It is important to compare representative profiles over extended periods of time because representation is a key component of democracy and because institutions and their representation provide a privileged view of social and political change. Additionally, it highlights the trend of democratization since it is able to assess the openness to political engagement and the recruitment of legislators from more extensive social groups (Cotta; Best, 2007).

The study of political recruitment demonstrates the underrepresentation that occurs across an extensive range of social strata. The middle class and the majority of the population are underrepresented in

parliaments while the upper classes are overrepresented; as a result, "political representation provides the opposite image of social structure" (Gaxie, 2012, 166). The political and social characteristics of legislators disclose political asymmetries that may influence, for example, legislative production, given that parliaments at some point resemble social structures (Semenova; Edinger; Best, 2013).

Likewise, the literature highlights the special role of professions in political recruitment. Certain professions, like law and professors, offer both the financial resources and develop skills crucial for politics, such as public speaking and negotiation (Dogan, 1999; Weber, 2007; Gaxie, 2012).

An important factor to consider is education, since it plays a role in perpetuating asymmetries as the education system distributes positions unevenly through social groups. The level of instruction indicates control of resources and social connections and may suggest where socialization and political recruitment occurred, specifically as a "strategic element for the construction of the identity of elites" (Cotta; Best, 2007, p. 25-26; Gaxie; Godmer, 2007).

Representatives generally have a higher level of education than the general population. The study by Gaxie and Godmer (2007) expose how the law degree predominance changed to economics and public administration. Law degrees were the majority in the second half of the nineteenth century, which has decreased since the second half of the twentieth century. Studying Brazil, Carvalho (2012) emphasizes the significance of law degrees during the Empire (1822–1899), and Codato *et al.* (2016) corroborate this relevance from 1945 to 1990 despite the decline of rates.

Another outstanding discussion about parliamentary elites is regarding professionalization. More than a hundred years ago, Max Weber described this process which occurred with the specialization of parties. The wealthy and educated notables lost prominence in front of those who made politics their main occupation (Weber, 2007, p. 85). Since Weber's exposition, several authors have analyzed political professionalization.

The idea that professional politicians dedicate themselves exclusively to politics or spend the majority of their time on it and make politics the main

source of income is a key point in this topic (Panebianco, 1982). Borchert (2003, p. 7-8) also emphasized the commitment (full-time job) and the economic aspect. He argues that professionalization cannot be reduced to a one-dimension concept; instead, scholars should consider "arising opportunities and making use of them". In other words, the positions available and the individual decision to "make politics not only their pastime but their job". There are some preconditions, like attractive income, "mechanisms of career maintenance", and "chances for career advancement".

Allen *et al.* (2020) review the literature and political discourse about career politicians<sup>2</sup> and synthesize four main characteristics associated with them: 1) strong vocational commitment, by accounting for the time spent in the parliament; 2) political ambition, measuring the desire to continue the political career; 3) narrow occupational backgrounds, tracking down the experience before parliament and counting pre-parliamentary time spent; and 4) limited life experiences, estimating age at entry to the House of Commons. The authors claim that only one dimension is necessary to be considered a career politician because, as a matter of degree, politicians who satisfy four dimensions are considered "strong career politicians".

The structure of opportunities in a given democracy also must be considered since it encourages ambition. Schlesinger (1966) argues that a person's current position fosters hopes and aspirations for future office. On the contrary, posts with limited chances for promotion discourage office ambitions. "Politics is, after all, a game of advancement, and a man [or woman] succeeds only if he [she] advances as far as his situation will permit". There are three directions of ambition: discrete, static, and progressive. 1) Discrete is when a politician aspires to a position for a time and resolves to leave public service. 2) Static: This occurs when a politician seeks a lengthy

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2 The terms "professional politician", "career politician", "careerists", and "political class" may be used as synonyms. A "professional politician" is one who dedicates exclusively to politics. The "career politicians" also have this commitment, and Allen *et al.* (2000) add the three characteristics described above.

career in a single office. 3) Progressive: when a politician expects to attain a higher office than the one he or she currently holds. In this manner, an office serves to foster aspirations.

Having discussed literature about elites, it is necessary to address the role of elites in regime change. Dogan and Higley (1998) investigate elites, crises, and regime change. The authors argue that regimes change due to crises and elites' actions. Some crises, like independence, revolution, or defeat in war, may result in regime change when confrontation among elites promotes alterations in its composition (Political crisis – Elite change – regime change). Hoffmann-Lange (1998) and Wasilewski (1998) confirm the relationship in Germany, Poland, Russia, and Hungary.

According to Dogan and Higley (1998), the kind of relationship among elites has consequences for democracy. Elites could be united or disunited. The disunited elite does not agree with the value of political institutions or with interpretations of rules, which are constantly in dispute. In this scenario, distrust and insecurity are frequent, resulting in battles for power and violent conflicts. Therefore, these elite relationships could produce a succession of authoritarian regimes with a short and unstable democratic period.

On the other hand, elites may be united by an ideology or consensus. The *Ideocratically united political elite* shared the same ideology, religious, ethnic, or national creed. Those united elites promote a stable totalitarian regime. The *Consensually united political elite* flourishes in a society where numerous ideologies, political movements, religions, and political parties compete with each other. What is striking is their respect for the established rules of political competition. As a result, this united elite produces a stable democracy.

The analyses of Burton and Higley (1998) emphasize the importance of consensus for democratic stability. When groups disagree and question institutions, they tend to dispute for predominance. The agreement about established rules subdues and tames politics to democratic practices, resulting in obedience to previous agreements promoting predictability. Therefore, democracy's rule is established by agreement among groups about the value of institutions and the rules of competition, which all political actors



should respect.

The change of a regime may have significant consequences for political elites. Cotta and Verzichelli (2007) analyse the relation between the modification of elite profiles and the democratization process (or their interruption) in Europe over 150 years and find differences between countries in which democracy was a continuous path and those in which it was interrupted by authoritarian periods. In the former, political elites changed gradually with the longevity of groups; in the latter, there were abrupt modifications. For example, in the 1970s, the democratization of Iberian countries experienced great renovations, as did the first elections post-nazi-fascism in Italy and Germany.

Likewise, Schmitter (2018) studies the role of elites in the transition from autocracies to democracies and concludes that the way in which the transition occurs produces different results. It is possible to completely alter political groups or even maintain elites since changing regimes does not necessarily mean altering elite profiles, which may incorporate experienced political actors.

Another relevant contribution, O'Donnell (1999) shed light on democratic theory considering the new democracies outside the "northwest quadrant" of the world – Europe, North America, and more Australia and New Zealand. He criticizes minimalist conceptions of democracy and proposes a realistic and restricted, but not minimalist, definition of a democratic regime. Elections must be competitive, free, egalitarian, decisive and inclusive. As regards the decisive aspect of the election, those elected are allowed to exercise the office and must be able to freely exercise their mandate within the democratic and constitutional legal framework, and they are also allowed to complete their mandates within the stipulated legal limits.

Mainwaring, Brinks and Pérez-Liñán (2001) also faced the challenge of classifying political regimes in Latin America. The authors propose a methodology focusing on Latin America between 1945 and 1999. They criticize dichotomous classifications (democracy vs. authoritarianism) for being simplistic and propose a trichotomous classification that includes semi-democratic regimes as an intermediate category. The authors advocate a

"trichotomous" classification (with three categories) of political regimes, rather than the traditional dichotomy. The dichotomy, they argue, fails to capture intermediate regimes, obscuring important variations. The idea of "semi-democracy" makes it possible to analyse historical regimes that don't fit neatly into the dichotomy. This "trichotomous" categorization offers a more precise and complete analysis of these regimes, recognizing their hybrid characteristics and nuances.

One instance of these many ambiguities and complexities of regime classification in Latin America is the Brazilian post-1964 regime, since it was authoritarian, but it had a "democratic pretense" (Schneider, 2014), which means that militaries had an obsession to make government appear to be a democracy. Differently from the civilian dictatorship of New State, when between 1937 and 1945 no election occurred, and party preference was forbidden. The military regime allowed only two parties: the National Renewal Alliance (ARENA), which supported dictatorship, and the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), which opposed the military regime. In many cities' elections for executive and legislative positions continued and the majority of legislative bodies remained open. However, the military regime used various mechanisms to control the results of elections, imposing on the opposition a different situation from supporters of the dictatorship.

Following a discussion of the theoretical framework, turning now to the study's hypothesis. Given the historical context seems plausible investigate the ideological values of politicians matters to success in democratization. Examining their party affiliations between 1965 and 1979 offers valuable insight. As noted by Grinberg (2009), the ARENA party was widely understood as an instrument of the military regime. However, her analysis also highlights the existing tension between the political class and the military. While seemingly contradictory, participation in a government that restricted political activity, ARENA politicians agreed with the military regime to some extent. In this sense, party affiliation is considering a measure of agreement. To test this hypothesis, I shall verify the party affiliation of all deputies in the sample from 1965 to 1979, when the military regime established bipartisanship from 1965 to 1979.

**Hypothesis 1:** Members of the MDB had a greater chance of electoral success than those from the ARENA during the democratization of the 1980s.

Another hypothesis examines the social background of state deputies. Here, I will analyse the homogeneity of the 146-member group by investigating similarities in education, profession, and whether they belonged to political families. Gaetano Mosca (1939) highlights the advantage of early exposure to politics, particularly for high-stakes decision-making positions. This preparation prepares individuals with the social rules of this specific environment, minimizing misunderstandings common for newcomers to the political world. While competition is supposedly open to all, in practice the majority of the population does not have the means to cover the lengthy preparation required. Additionally, having contacts and relationships facilitates entry, positioning individuals for success. Thus, it is possible that a deputy from a political family was more persistent than someone who did not come from this background because they had support from their relatives, who can offer office opportunities in uncertain moments. I shall account for the 146 groups that were a part of a political family in order to test this hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 2:** Individuals from a political family persisted more in their political career than other during democratization period.

In conclusion, according to Schlesinger's proposition, As Schlesinger states, ambition is foster according to each individual's possibilities, *i.e.*, the current position allows for hopes of advancement. Politics is a game of progression, and the ambitious politician continues as far as their context permits. Thus, those who could compete in the 1980s did remain in politics. To test this assumption, it is necessary to verify how many deputies were alive at the time of democratization and the reason why all 1006 state deputies left politics.

### III. Research design

This section outlines the methodology employed, emphasizing a career-focused approach rather than an institutional perspective. It also details the research choices, including case selection, data collection, organization, and treatment methods.

Previous researches on political careers “have been mainly studied under the perspective of recruitment to national parliaments or national governments” (Stolz, 2022, p. 173). In general, those studies analyze the parliamentary level of education, prior occupational background, prior political experience, and the average tenure length; nonetheless, they do not consider the individual’s career in its entirety, disregarding the territorial level of positions held before as well as after legislature.

These studies about parliamentary careers used a static approach (Borchet; Stoltz, 2011a) by choosing an institution, often a national legislature, and the researcher analyses the legislators' profile and recruitment in a time span (Best; Edinger, 2005; Cotta; Best, 2007). Notwithstanding, the focus on an institution instead of an individual trajectory is a methodological decision that implies not apprehending interaction across territorial levels, not following the individual’s career’s trajectory in its entirety makes it impossible to analyse all the movements that may have happened in influencing such career. Consequently, these studies miss critical insights into how movements between different political arenas influence individual careers.

To address these limitations, this study adopts a dynamic, career-focused approach. I trace the complete political trajectories of state legislators, from their first roles – whether elective or non-elective – through to their last recorded positions at the municipal, regional, or federal levels. This comprehensive perspective allows us to account for their participation in political parties, governments, and legislatures. By mapping these trajectories, the study aims to uncover patterns of mobility and continuity that are essential for understanding the role of political elites in Brazil’s

democratic transitions.

Having defined the methodological approach, the case selection considered the Brazilian geographic and political context during the first democracy (1945–1964). During this period, Brazil was composed of 20 states, one federal district, and one federal territory. The goal was to include cases from all five regions of the country to ensure geographic diversity and capture variations in political, economic, and social dynamics. However, the availability and accessibility of data from state legislatures varied significantly, which impacted the final selection of cases.

Brazil's regions present stark disparities in economic, social, scientific, and human development, which are also reflected in the resources and archival practices of state legislatures. While some assemblies maintain well-organized and accessible records, others lack historical information, such as complete lists of former deputies. In these cases, fieldwork at the respective assemblies would have been necessary to obtain the missing data. However, due to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person data collection was not feasible. As a result, this study relied exclusively on data available online, which unfortunately excluded states from the Northern Region.

Despite these limitations, efforts were made to ensure that the selected cases represent a diverse cross-section of Brazil's political landscape. The final selection included states from regions with varying degrees of economic development and differing political traditions, thereby providing a broad basis for analysing the career trajectories of state legislators under different regional conditions. Only seven state assemblies provided basic information requested about state deputies from 1947 to 1963. From the Northeast region: the states of Ceará (CE) and Bahia (BA); from the Central-West, the state of Goiás (GO); from the Southeast, Minas Gerais (MG) and São Paulo (SP); and from the South, Rio Grande do Sul (RS) and Santa Catarina (SC).

The data collection process was conducted online, focusing on seven state assemblies. This process was challenging due to the significant variation in the amount and quality of information provided by each legislature. Unlike the federal Chamber of Deputies, which follows standardized practices for

publicizing data, state legislative bodies lack uniformity in their organizational approaches and levels of transparency. Each assembly has its own system for archiving and sharing information, which often complicates comparative research.

In many cases, the data provided by the assemblies were incomplete. This lack of standardization required the research to adapt to the limitations of each dataset. Whenever possible, supplementary information was cross-referenced from other publicly available online sources, such as historical archives, and government databases, to fill in gaps and ensure consistency in the dataset. Despite these efforts, the limitations of state assemblies' transparency and archival practices resulted in incomplete records for some legislators, which were acknowledged and accounted for in the analysis. These challenges highlight the broader issue of insufficient standardization and transparency in subnational legislative data in Brazil.<sup>3</sup>

Given the state assemblies' inability to provide all the necessary information, it was essential to seek data from other institutions. The process of collecting information involved navigating through a variety of sources, each with different levels of accessibility and completeness. Regional Electoral Courts (*Tribunais Regionais Eleitorais* - TREs) were consulted, but the availability and quality of municipal electoral data varied significantly between states. In some cases, municipal-level data were entirely unavailable.

To address these gaps, I reached out directly to municipal executive and legislative bodies, requesting information on the political careers of relevant individuals. Additionally, interviews were conducted with relatives of

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3 Assembly of Rio Grande do Sul (<http://www2.al.rs.gov.br/memorial/Legislaturas>); Assembly of Santa Catarina (<https://memoriapolitica.alesc.sc.gov.br>); Assembly of Ceará (<https://www.al.ce.gov.br/assembleia-legislativa>); Assembly of Bahia (<https://www.al.ba.gov.br/deputados/legislatura/>); Assembly of Minas Gerais (<https://www.almg.gov.br/deputados>); Assembly of São Paulo (<https://www.al.sp.gov.br/deputado>); Assembly of Goiás (<https://publicacoes.al.go.leg.br/memorial>). Access: Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

politicians via phone and email to supplement and verify information.<sup>4</sup> Other sources consulted included the Getúlio Vargas Foundation's political dictionary,<sup>5</sup> the Chamber of Deputies and Senate,<sup>6</sup> and *Hemeroteca Digital*<sup>7</sup> for historical newspaper archives. These complementary sources were critical in piecing together incomplete career trajectories and providing a more comprehensive dataset for analysis.

The data collected from public institutions and interviews with politicians' relatives were coded into 132 variables capturing the profile and political trajectory of each individual. These variables included information on personal background, political careers, and legislative activity. For each state legislator, I gathered details on their date and place of birth and death, family origins, spouse's name and family connections, and any political relatives. Additional data included their educational background, professional experience, and partisan affiliations.

The dataset also documented the positions held by each legislator throughout their career, encompassing elective and appointed roles at the municipal, state, and federal levels, as well as positions in public administration. I recorded details about their tenure in the state assembly, including the number of mandates served, partisan positions held, and legislative activities, such as committee work and house presidencies.

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4 José Luís Gobbi, deputy Humberto Gobbi's son, is from Rio Grande do Sul. Mauro Silper, deputy Fabio Antônio da Silva Pereira's son, is from Minas Gerais. Lenora Barbo, deputy Manoel Demóstenes Barbo de Siqueira's daughter, is from Goiás. And councilor João Pedro Azevedo, from Rio Grande do Sul.

5 DHBB. *Dicionário Histórico-Biográfico Brasileiro*. Available: <http://www.fgv.br/cpdoc/acervo/arquivo>. Access: Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

6 Quem são? *Câmara dos Deputados*. Available: <https://www.camara.leg.br/deputados/quem-sao> and <https://www25.senado.leg.br/web/senadores/legislaturas-anteriores>. Access: Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

7 BN-RJ. *Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira*. Available at <http://memoria.bn.br/hdb/periodico.aspx>. Accessed in 01 Aug. 2022.

Moreover, I traced their subsequent careers, identifying whether they pursued other elective mandates, held appointed positions, transitioned to other professions, or left politics altogether. Information was also collected on cases where individuals lost their mandates, faced political rights restrictions, or chose not to run for re-election.

The statistical software R was used to conduct the analysis, facilitating the organization, exploration, and interpretation of the data. This tool enabled the identification of patterns and trends in the political careers of state legislators, supporting the study's broader analytical goals.

Considering that I gathered all offices over the span of each trajectory, searching for municipal-level information was arduous. Brazil has 5.570 municipalities with vast heterogeneity and economic disparities; wealthy large cities such as São Paulo and Curitiba offer excellent data publicization, whereas many small cities scarcely maintain an official website. Consequently, a number of municipal executives and legislatives did not respond to my questions, and others informed me that they were unaware of the identity of the former city councilman, particularly from the period between the First Republic (1889–1930) and the 1930s. Although municipal data was requested, it was usually unavailable. It is essential to note that my sample may be biased based on municipal data, and it is possible that politicians had lengthy careers at the local level for which I was unable to obtain data.

The organization of the data aimed to address the research objectives and test the proposed hypotheses, relying on information extracted from the compiled database. Dates of birth and death were used to determine which legislators were alive during the 1980s and their respective ages. However, information regarding the deaths of 209 individuals could not be located, representing a limitation in the dataset.

To understand the reasons for leaving politics, I examined the entire career trajectories of legislators, identifying instances of career changes, unsuccessful elections, retirements, deaths, and losses of political mandates. Data on political affiliations and any evidence of coercion or influence by the military regime were collected to test Hypothesis 1, which addresses the



impact of these factors on political continuity.

Lastly, I compared two groups of legislators – those who continued their political careers and those who did not – using variables such as gender, education, profession, and family political connections. The data on political families were particularly crucial for testing Hypothesis 2, which explores the role of familial ties in political continuity.

The sample consists of 1.152 state legislators that were counted only once, even if they won re-election. In addition to the newcomers from each legislative term, I also added 147 politicians, or 10% of the most-voted candidates, who were not elected but served as substitutes for elected legislators. Parliamentarians are permitted to withdraw for a time without losing their mandate, after which a temporary replacement from each party takes over. I included in the sample every politician who assumed the mandate, regardless of whether he or she subsequently lost their political rights or resigned; for example, those who lost their mandates when the Communist Party was banned in 1947.

The distribution of 1.152 legislators across states is shown in Table 1. The number of offices available in each state during the first democracy was proportional to its population size, which was defined by each state constitution and changed as the state population grew. Furthermore, the distribution of those who remained in politics during the 1980s democratization.

**Table 1** – Selection of state deputies

States	BA	CE	GO	MG	RS	SC	SP	Total
Deputies elected in 1947 to 1963*	<b>173</b>	124	104	208	173	126	244	1152
Politician with political activity in 1980s	<b>20</b>	18	15	28	21	12	32	146

**Source:** State assemblies and multiple data. Author elaboration, 2024.

\* Deputies were count only once, including the 10% of the top-performing candidates.

The selection of 146 politicians had to grapple with the ambiguity surrounding the power dynamics within the military regime. While the military appointed politicians to some positions, they allowed elections for others. I include all politicians who held political positions from 1980 on, in parties, elective offices, and appointed offices, even though it was an elective position appointed by the military, such as the indirectly elected governor or appointed mayor.

## **IV. The state deputies throughout the democratization**

In order to understand the continuity of political careers a comprehensive investigation into the lifespans of these legislators is paramount. First, I investigate who could hold a political office from the 1980s on by checking who was alive at the time and their ages. An examination of the 1006 parliamentarians (excluding the 146-group) exposes an absence of information about the deaths of 209 legislators. A significant part of those with documented dates of demise (417) passed away until to 1983. Consequently, based on the available information, only 380 politicians could have potentially continued their political careers; however, only 146 demonstrably did so.

Comparing the ages between the two groups reveals that the successful ones were slightly younger. The eldest of the 1.152 group was born in 1872 and the youngest in 1936; on average, they were 70 years old in 1980. While the oldest of the 146 politicians was born in 1904, on average, they were 60 years old in 1980. Probably, an individual who is more than 60 years old is expected to wish for retirement, which applies to both groups.

To comprehend why, out of the 380 individuals who could pursue a career in politics, only 146 did so in the 1980s, I categorized the reasons behind each legislator's withdrawal from politics. I classified the motives of the 1006 parliamentarians as shown in Table 2. Change the profession is the most prevalent option. By choosing a different direction, the individual withdrew from politics and returned to their original profession or pursued other careers. A typical path was choosing a safe and advantageous position in public administration. One of the most sought-after positions was that of minister of the State Court of Accounts, which is appointed by the state governor; even more desirable was the position of minister of the Federal Court of Accounts, which is designated by the president of the Republic. As 36% of parliamentarians chose to change careers, it seems that a relevant part of them preferred to achieve a more advantageous post than pursue a

political career which expose low professionalization. A political career was not attractive for a significant part of the sample.

**Table 2** – Motivation for leaving politics.

<b>Career change</b>	<b>365 (36%)</b>
Quit	242 (24%)
Retirement	134 (13%)
Unknow	129 (13%)
Death	80 (8%)
Lost mandate and/or political rights, political exile	54 (5%)
Total	1006 (100%)

**Source:** Multiple sources. Author elaboration, 2024.

The second frequent alternative was to desist from a political career, which indicates that a politician sought re-election but was unsuccessful and quit. I classified his decision to leave politics voluntarily, without defeat in an election, as retirement. Since 24% failed and 13% retired, which is a more expected departure after extended service, this shows an arduous political context for continuity. The remaining categories highlight the challenges of political career, with a small number succumbing to death while in office (8%), including political murders. The small number of deaths is due to the fact that I only account for those politicians that died while in office. 5% of politicians suffered political coercion and did not continue in political activity. For example, president João Goulart's career was interrupted by the military coup of 1964, and he died in political exile; deputies that lost the mandate

and remained in political offices were not counted here. Understanding these motivations can inform that some politicians were not interested in continuing (36%), others tried and failed (24%) finding it difficult to remain, and the military regime succeeded in stopping some politician's careers (5%).

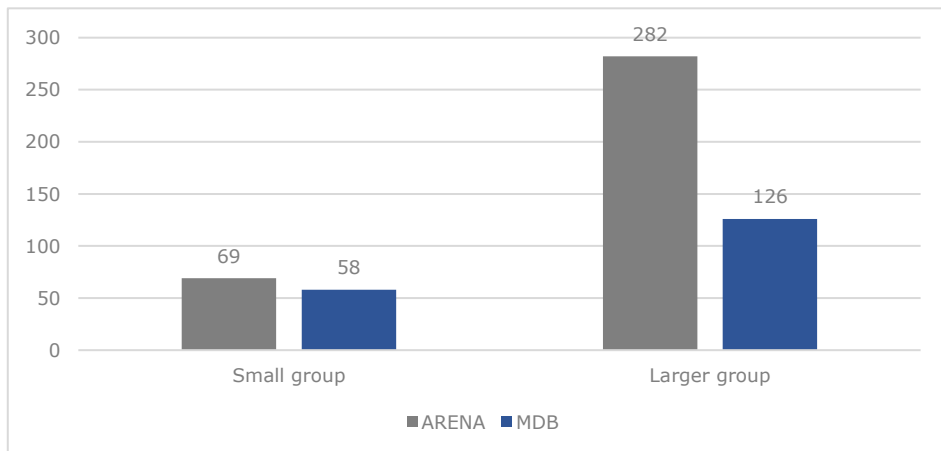
Moving on now to test hypotheses 1 about ideological value considering party affiliation. From 1965 to 1979, the military regime allowed only two parties: the National Renewal Alliance (ARENA), which supported dictatorship, and the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), which opposed the military regime. I counted 408 party affiliations. That is because a great number of politicians did not affiliate with either of the two parties because many had to leave the country or chose not to participate in this moment. Most affiliations concern one politician, but in a minority of cases, one deputy was affiliated with both ARENA and MDB.

Splitting the sample into two groups – I separate the 146 politicians (small group) from other party affiliations (large sample) – reveals a trend as shown in Chart 1. Supporters of ARENA form a majority in both groups; however, a difference emerges in their degree of support towards the dictatorship. Out of 282 ARENA politicians, only 69 managed to remain in politics, whereas 68 out of 126 MDB representatives persisted. A majority in the larger group (69%) expressed support for the dictatorship, more than double the number who aligned with the opposition. Within the smaller group, 54% identified with ARENA, while 46% supported the MDB party. Therefore, the distribution of support was more unevenly distributed in the larger group.

An insightful observation derived from Chart 1 is the varying degrees of success between MDB and ARENA politicians. Specifically, it is notable that a larger proportion of MDB representatives sustained their political careers compared to ARENA counterparts. Despite the prevailing support for dictatorship among the majority of state deputies, a noteworthy contrast emerges: 75% of ARENA politicians did not hold office during the democratization period, while a slightly smaller proportion, 54%, of MDB politicians as well. Chart 1 reveals a clear distinction in the political trajectories of MDB and ARENA representatives following democratization. While a larger number of ARENA politicians (213) did not continue in office

compared to MDB (68), a higher proportion of MDB representatives (46%) managed to retain their positions compared to ARENA (25%). This suggests that opposition benefited from democratization.

**Chart 1** – Party affiliation in 1965 to 1979



**Source:** Multiple sources. Author elaboration, 2024.

The historical context of the military dictatorship illustrated the challenges faced by politicians during that period. The regime punished many of them, even from ARENA, with the loss of political rights; they could not exercise any political office for a period of time, often 10 years. Some of them had to leave the country in order to preserve their lives, although many were killed by the dictatorship. In the sample of 146 parliamentarians, 20% suffered any type of coercion from the regime, such as the loss of political rights (31), impediment to exercising elected political office, prison, and the loss of a stable public position. Thus, the military dictatorship's instability may account for the small percentage of those who persisted in their political

activities in the democratic period.

Another important aspect involves analyzing the characteristics of the 146 deputies compared to the larger group of 1.152 politicians. This includes factors like gender, education, profession, and political family background. Notably, the data reveals a stark underrepresentation of women. In the larger sample, only 0.78% were female, and this disparity worsened among the 146 deputies, with just one woman remaining – Zuleika Alambert, a feminist communist legislator.

Considering the levels of education of the two populations, both were highly educated. As shown in Table 3, the smaller sample exhibits a slightly higher proportion of well-educated individuals, indicating homogeneity within this group. This finding aligns with Gaxie and Godmer's (2007) observation of the education of the political class contrasting with the larger population.

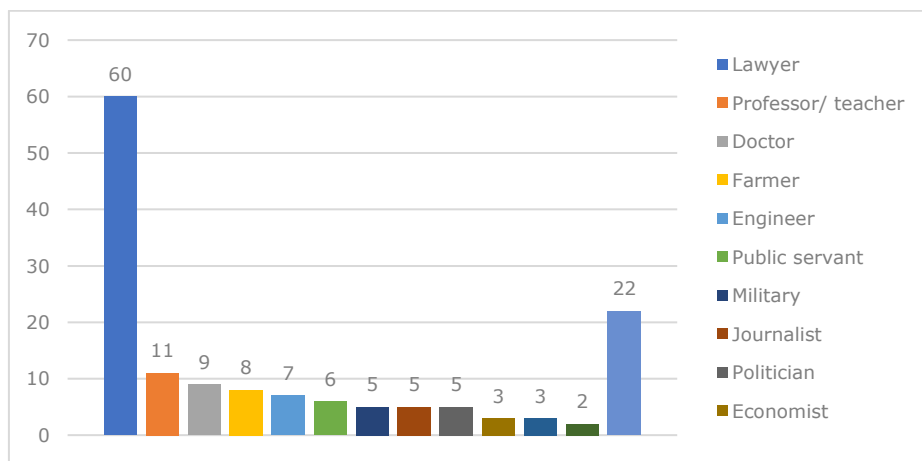
**Table 3** – Level of education

	<b>Higher education</b>	<b>Military school</b>	<b>Unkown</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Total</b>
Larger sample	747 (65%)	15 (1%)	66 (6%)	324 (28%)	1152
Smaller sample	114 (78%)	2 (1%)	6 (4%)	24 (16%)	146

**Source:** Multiple sources. Author elaboration, 2024.

Another trait that points out unity in the small sample is profession. The majority of them were lawyers (41%), with a concentration in traditional law schools, which confirms the predominance stated in the literature. Followed by professors or teachers, doctors, farmers, and engineers, as shown in Chart 2.

**Chart 2** – Educational and occupation background of state deputies



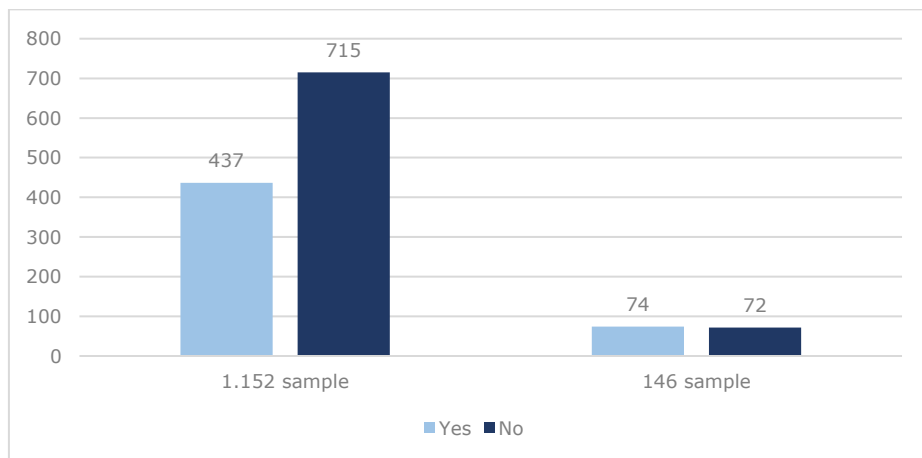
**Source:** Multiple sources. Author elaboration, 2024.

To investigate Hypothesis 2, I analyzed family ties. As shown in Chart 3, successful individuals (n=146) were more likely to have a relative in politics compared to the general population. While only 38% of the general population has a family member in politics, this proportion rose to 51% among successful individuals. This finding suggests a potential association between political family ties and successful political careers. A strong support network, particularly during periods of political instability, could contribute to this association by facilitating access to resources and opportunities or by



providing guidance and mentorship.

**Chart 3** – Were politicians' part of a political family?



**Source:** Multiple sources. Author elaboration, 2024.

Having discussed the findings, it is possible to evaluate Schlesinger assumptions about the ambitious politicians had a greater probability of continuing in the democratization period. Schlesinger assumes that politicians always want to persist in politics if they have a chance. According to this assumption, if they have the opportunity, they engage in political competition. However, the data exposes that 36% of them leave politics and change careers. It is possible that some of them use the political office to achieve a more advantageous position. One explanation for this is that legislatives at that time were not professionalized and profitable; for this reason, many deputies were not interested in continuing. According to the autobiographies of parliamentarians, they did not have the resources available today, such as payment of assessors, transportation, and housing allowance. Based on the

collected data, many legislators held one or more professions in addition to their political office. Given that legislative resources were insufficient to fulfill basic needs, it is likely that political offices were not viewed as a primary occupation. A substantial proportion of parliamentarians were not financially dependent on politics. Consequently, a significant number of them utilized this opportunity to advance to a better-suited position.

Schlesinger's statements make more sense to those 24% who quit politics and to 146 politicians. Those who tried the election but failed wanted to remain in politics; however, their situation did not allow them to advance. As regards the smaller group, the ambitious politician continues as far as their context permits (Schlesinger, 1966), and the political ambition is the desire to continue the political career (Allen *et al.*, 2013). The fact that, despite all the coercion from dictatorship, 146 politicians persisted in their political careers during democratization makes them ambitious politicians.

## V. Conclusion

Elites in the twentieth century did not agree with the value of political institutions; they dispute interpretations of established rules, such as electoral competition, when the losing candidate did not accept the result of the election. Consequently, the country suffered a succession of regime changes (Revolution of 1930, civilian dictatorship New State 1937–1945, first democracy 1945–1964, military dictatorship 1964–1988, current democracy). The Brazilian democratization process is illustrated by 1.152 legislators' trajectory since the great majority of them supported dictatorship and others had important participation in democratic opening.

The politician's willingness to advance in the political game was affected by regime changes. Even though a politician tried to run for re-election, their previous political choices were relevant in democratic elections. For the majority, they enjoy the benefits of being supporters of dictatorship; however, they were punished for this alliance. Although 69 skilled politicians

from ARENA were able to move on in the democratic period, as Madeira (2011) has shown. The ambitious politician in a position to try a career could succeed. Despite all the military coercion, instability, and uncertainty of regime changes, their ambition made them continue.

The successful parliamentarians had similar characteristics. They were male, educated (lawyers, professors, doctors, engineers), and they belonged to political families, which could help in the adversities of being politicians during regime changes.

The two groups exhibited some differences. The smaller group was younger, allowing them to pursue longer political careers under the new democracy. However, age and mortality were not the sole determinants of their political trajectories. The crucial distinction lies in the composition of the groups. The larger group contained a mix of unprofessional and ambitious politicians, while the smaller group was comprised solely of ambitious individuals. Politicians who opted for career changes tended not to be professional politicians. While some who left politics may have harbored ambitions, their attempt at an election under democratic rules suggests a continued desire for political participation, albeit unsuccessful. By "ambitious politician", I refer to someone who prioritized a long political career over seeking safer or more lucrative opportunities, as exemplified by the 146 politicians who successfully transitioned to democracy.

The alignment with the former dictatorship also differed between the two. Nearly a quarter (24%) of the 1.152 state deputies belonged to ARENA, the party associated with the military regime. Conversely, the smaller group displayed a greater affiliation with MDB (46%), compared to just 31% in the larger group. This finding aligns with expectations: those who opposed the dictatorship were more likely to find success in the new democratic order.

In conclusion, ambitious politicians who opposed the dictatorship and could rely on the political family were more likely to succeed in the democratization process. This highlights a lingering tension in Brazilian democracy. Voters punished those associated with the regime through electoral defeat; however, as Schmitter alerts, 69 politicians from ARENA were capable of continuity in democratic elections, which underscores a key

point: some actors successfully adapted and projected themselves from the dictatorship into the new democratic order. Antônio Carlos Magalhães serves as a prominent example of such figures who continued to wield significant influence for extended periods.

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