

Chapter 3

The Evolution of Electoral Support, 1978–94

“He steals, but he gets things done.”

(A description first used to describe Adhemar de Barros,
former populist governor of the state of São Paulo)

*“One of these days Louisianans are going to get good government . . . and
they ain’t going to like it!”*

Earl Long, 1950s

Brazilian states, as we have seen, play central parts in the drama of national politics. States vary greatly, however, in their ability to influence national politics. Any given state’s influence depends in large part on its ability to convert economic strength into national power, a conversion that itself depends on the pattern of political competition within the state. By patterns of political competition, I refer to the tendency of a state to elect deputies via constituencies that are concentrated or scattered, dominant or shared. These patterns of competition—the overall mix of constituency types—are closely linked not just to state-level socioeconomic and demographic conditions but to national-level political developments.

Why are these informal congressional constituencies so important? Consider the power of state governors. Governors from states such as São Paulo are automatically players in national politics, but most governors’ political influence depends on their ability to control their congressional delegations. In some states, the context of local and state politics facilitates the construction of a dominant and durable state machine, the kind of machine that enables a marginal governor to exercise national influence. In other states, governors simply cannot amass sufficient resources to affect the careers of lower-level politicians. Consider, too, the problem of corruption. Chapter 1 showed that deputies with certain kinds of vote distributions—especially the scattered-dominant type—

are more likely to be involved in corruption scandals. Voters find it easier to hold deputies with other kinds of voting bases accountable, thus reducing corruption. Last, consider the politicians who run for office. Challengers for legislative seats seek a space, a constituency, in an ongoing distribution of localized electoral support. Are voters free to cast ballots on the basis of candidates' positions on national issues, or are voters embedded in powerful patronage networks organized around the pursuit of local favors? Are constituencies so fragmented that newcomers can compete only by lavish spending, or can careers be built on local reputation? These conditions determine what kinds of citizens become politicians and constrain the choices available to politicians as they pursue their careers.

This chapter focuses on patterns of competition across states and over time. The analysis first investigates differences in concentration and domination between the states. It then asks how concentration and domination change over the course of four elections. In both cases, explanation relies on economic and demographic factors. The inquiry implies an examination of both states and individual deputies, but the ultimate goal is to understand the evolution of the state-level system.

Concentration and Domination across States

Is voting support in some states more spatially concentrated and more dominant than in others? Have spatial concentration and domination changed over the 1978–94 period? Most informed Brazilians regard northeastern bailiwicks as the country's strongest and believe that in recent years bailiwicks have tightened.¹ This conventional wisdom is both right and wrong. On the basis of the five elections between 1978 and 1994, it is clear that (1) northeastern deputies are in fact more likely to dominate the municipalities where they get votes; (2) the most concentrated vote distributions are found not in the Northeast but in the larger, more prosperous states of Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo; and (3) concentration of support rose steadily after 1982 but by 1994 nearly leveled off.²

1. This conclusion was reached by the unscientific method of simply asking social scientists and journalists.

2. Spatial autocorrelation is measured with Moran's I, calculated for each deputy and for each election with an unweighted nearest-neighbor matrix of first-order contiguities. The Z-scores associated with the Moran's I statistic, which are comparable across states, constitute the actual in-

Explaining patterns of support at the state level is a more inductive process than modeling budgetary amendments, and since there are only eighteen cases, the data can be “eyeballed” for testable intuitions. Why are northeastern deputies less likely to concentrate support but more likely to dominate? States in the Northeast are smaller, so deputies easily campaign all over. Northeastern capitals (with their surrounding areas) comprise larger fractions of total state populations than do capitals in the South. Electoral victory in the Northeast more often requires votes in the capital city as a supplement to regional bailiwicks. Northeastern states have fewer municipalities, so deputies easily move around and make deals all over the state.³ And finally, higher southern educational levels encourage greater political awareness, thus weakening the boss control that facilitates deals with dispersed local leaders. As boss control diminishes, interparty competition grows; while southern deputies may dominate within their own parties, they are rarely able to achieve overall municipal control.

Tables 6 and 7 present the results of models in which average domination and clustering per state are regressed on a series of explanatory variables.⁴ Both models attain very high levels of statistical significance (although the high *R*-squareds result from the small *n*). Domination is higher where there are more municipalities, lower in states with more urban populations, and a bit higher in the Northeast.⁵ The domination regression, in spite of its statistical success, is somewhat unsatisfactory. Because it relies more on the regional dummy, it leaves open the question of exactly which regional characteristics contribute to greater domination. Is it possible to replace the regional dummy with the particular northeastern characteristics affecting domination? Surprisingly, replacing the dummy with measures of socioeconomic conditions (such as per capita income and percentage of the population in agriculture) weakens rather than strengthens the results. The Northeast dummy, in other words, is not merely a proxy for poverty, because levels of domination do not increase in step with increasing poverty. Is there something special about the Northeast that produces more deputies with dominant distributions? Northeastern states are dependent

indicator. I am indebted to Art Getis of the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis for advice on Moran's *I*. For a discussion of this and other spatial statistics, see Cliff et al. 1975.

3. Overall state-level concentration was regressed on the number of municipalities, the percentage of the population living in the capital city, and state per capita income.

4. To confirm that state-level domination and concentration are unrelated, each model includes the other as a regressor. Domination and concentration are, in fact, uncorrelated.

5. The positive relationship between domination and the number of municipalities probably reflects the importance of Minas Gerais, which has by far the most municipalities and a fairly high level of dominance.

TABLE 6. Explaining Domination at the Level of the State, 1978–94

Dependent Variable: Domination			
Parameter	Estimate	T for HO: Parameter = 0	Pr < .05
Intercept	0.4894	9.90	*
Number of municipalities	0.0002	3.74	*
Northeast region	0.0307	1.52	
Percent urban	-.3838	-5.22	*
$R^2 = .807$	F = 19.48	Pr < .0001	N = 18

TABLE 7. Explaining Clustering at the Level of the State, 1978–94

Dependent Variable: Clustering			
Parameter	Estimate	T for HO: Parameter = 0	Pr < .05
Intercept	-1.1587	-.44	
Percent in capital	-17.6006	-5.35	*
Percent urban	9.0824	1.52	
Number of municipalities	0.0083	2.77	*
Northeast region	-2.687	-3.44	*
Interparty fragmentation	0.0178	2.09	*
$R^2 = .931$	F = 32.42	Pr < .0001	N = 18

on federal pork. Federal deputies—especially those who build up seniority—play a major role in channeling that pork, and the political families help organize pork distribution. Perhaps over the years this resource has given northeastern deputies more control over their constituencies. To be in the minority when the majority controls all access to critical resources is to starve, hence opposition withers away.⁶

The model explains spatial concentration better than domination. Concentration is much lower when larger fractions of the population live in the metropolitan areas of capital cities, a bit higher when more people live in urban settings, substantially higher in states with more municipalities, lower in the Northeast, and higher when interparty fragmentation is greater. Some states deviate sharply (based on the regression residuals) from this pattern. Bahia, which is both northeastern and large, is much less concentrated than the model pre-

6. The states of the South and Southeast also depend on outside resources, but their funds tend to come from sources such as the National Bank for Social and Economic Development (BNDES), which uses more universalistic criteria in its allocations.

dicts. Bahia's low rate of concentration, as chapter 4 will demonstrate, results from the scarcity of locally based deputies and the coordinating skills of the state's boss, Antônio Carlos Magalhães, who instructs candidates where to campaign and who uses federal largesse to prevent the erection of barriers to entry by local bosses.⁷

The Evolution of Concentration and Domination

Do domination and concentration change over the 1978–94 period? While domination is declining almost everywhere, concentration fell at the start of this sequence of elections, from 1978 until 1982, but subsequently began to rise once again. The Brazilian electorate's increasing politicization, furthered by vote-seeking candidates' attempts to venture into new territories, probably caused the fall. The 1978–82 decline in concentration appears to be a result of increases in the number of candidates whose votes naturally scatter, especially broadcasters, evangelicals, and businessmen. By 1990 their numbers, and thus overall concentration, stabilized.

To understand the evolution of concentration and domination, I will compare two explanations: one based on the logic of competition, the other based on changes in the career trajectories of new entrants into congressional races. Do different types of deputies behave differently? The answer is found in tables 8 and 9, which offer models of domination and concentration at the level of individual deputies.⁸

What kinds of deputies maintain dominant distributions?⁹ At the level of the individual deputy, domination and concentration are closely related; in other words, most deputies with dominant distributions concentrate their votes spatially as well.¹⁰ Dominant politicians are more likely to have careers in both state and local politics and in state bureaucracies. They are less likely to have

7. Bahia is labeled deviant because it had the largest residual of any state.

8. The states represented by dummy variables in these two tables are all large states with many candidates, thus reducing impacts specific to a single candidate.

9. The models include a series of state dummy variables to adjust for overall state differences in domination and concentration and for differences in the number of deputies per state. The dummies are not discussed individually, however, because they have no causal effects—i.e., they are system names rather than variable names.

10. These individual-level results are consistent with the earlier finding that domination and concentration are unrelated at the state level. Few southern deputies have high levels of domination, but those with concentrated distributions are more dominant than their scattered colleagues. In the Northeast, many deputies are dominant, and dominant northeastern deputies tend to con-

TABLE 8. Domination at the Level of the Individual Deputy, 1978–94

Dependent Variable: Domination			
Parameter	Estimate	T for HO: Parameter = 0	Pr < .05
Intercept	20.6816	16.85	*
Concentration	0.0071	12.17	*
Local or state career	0.0351	4.60	*
Bureaucratic-state career	-.0232	-2.00	*
Local career only	0.0003	0.03	
State career only	0.0041	.39	
Bureaucratic career only	0.0309	4.15	*
Year (1978–90)	-.0102	-16.56	*
Political family	0.0126	1.34	
Age of deputy	-.0006	-1.99	*
Terms served in chamber	0.0030	1.10	
Party: PMDB	0.0568	7.35	*
Party: PFL	0.0766	6.87	*
Party: PDS	0.0540	6.02	*
Party: PDT	-.0089	-.66	
Northeast	0.0189	2.14	*
Interparty fragmentation	-.0004	-4.76	*
Rio Grande do Sul	-.0704	-3.77	*
Santa Catarina	-.0291	-1.61	
Paraná	-.0626	-5.11	*
São Paulo	-.0861	-4.54	*
Rio de Janeiro	-.0861	-4.33	*
$R^2 = .46$		$F = 75.80$	$Pr < .0001$
		$N = 1,871$	

business careers or to have careers limited to either state or local politics. Until 1990, dominant deputies had more seniority in the Chamber, but the 1993 budget scandal persuaded many of the old lions that it was time to retire. As a result, after the 1994 election, dominant politicians were a bit younger than their less powerful colleagues, and seniority no longer mattered. Dominant deputies are more likely to be members of the major national parties (PMDB, PFL, or PPB) than of any small party, but political families make no difference. Dominance is higher in the Northeast than in the South, Rio, or São Paulo, and dominance drops when the states are more fragmented. Dominance decreases sharply over the course of the five elections analyzed.

It is clear that differing factors explain concentration and domination. Politicians with purely bureaucratic careers or with state-level careers have

centrate their votes. If domination and concentration are plotted on the ordinate and on the abscissa, respectively, northeastern deputies have a higher intercept.

TABLE 9. Concentration at the Level of the Individual Deputy, 1978–94

Dependent Variable: Concentration			
Parameter	Estimate	T for HO: Parameter = 0	Pr < .05
Intercept	-237.72	-4.73	*
Domination	10.412	12.17	*
Local or state career	0.381	1.30	
Bureaucratic-state career	-.048	-0.11	
Local career only	0.443	1.06	
State career only	-1.115	-2.76	*
Bureaucratic career only	-1.208	-4.25	*
Year (1978–90)	0.129	5.13	*
Political family	0.020	0.06	
Age of deputy	-.006	-0.47	*
Terms served in chamber	-.011	-0.10	
Party: PMDB	-0.371	-1.24	
Party: PFL	-.993	-2.30	*
Party: PDS	-.753	-2.17	*
Party: PDT	0.841	1.62	
Northeast	-5.500	-17.53	*
Interparty fragmentation	-.030	-8.33	*
Rio Grande do Sul	6.844	9.78	*
Santa Catarina	6.119	9.03	*
Paraná	1.848	3.94	*
São Paulo	9.571	13.94	*
Rio de Janeiro	1.029	1.35	
$R^2 = .461$ $F = 75.46$ $Pr < .0001$ $N = 1,871$			

much less concentrated votes than those with other career mixes. Thus, as politicians move away from local trajectories, they campaign more widely. This result is not tautological. State assembly and federal chamber districts are identical—that is, in both legislatures, whole states are districts. Furthermore, there are more state deputies than federal deputies. State deputies can easily run purely local campaigns, because they can win seats in even smaller bailiwicks than federal deputies. Former state deputies running for the federal chamber campaign more widely, so concentration falls.

Over the 1978–94 period, the typical deputy relied on a pattern of electoral support that was steadily more concentrated. By 1994, the trend toward concentration appears to have slowed in the states that were already quite concentrated. It continues, however, in the states that began with more scattered patterns.

Until 1994, political party affiliations had no effect on concentration. When the 1994 election is included, however, the picture changes: members of both

the PFL and the PPR exhibit more scattered vote patterns. This result has important implications for future debates on the electoral system, particularly on the prospects for adopting a mixed system along German lines. By 1994, both region and party divide deputies on issues of redistricting, because incumbent northeastern conservatives will have the hardest time gaining reelection under a district system.

Why does interparty fragmentation—weakly associated at the state level with greater concentration—reduce concentration at the individual level? In theory, deputies in competitive regions may still collect their votes in contiguous municipalities—the concentrated-shared distribution—but such deputies are a minority. Consider a region with high interparty fragmentation but low intraparty fragmentation, a region where a single deputy dominates the party vote but faces opposition from other parties. Such deputies are vulnerable to the kind of party swings occurring in 1986 and 1990, when the PMDB first scored a huge gain and then suffered a massive defeat. Recognizing their vulnerability, concentrated-dominant deputies expand their search for votes. If successful, these efforts reduce concentration. At the state level, however, the South remains more competitive and more concentrated than other parts of the nation.

What do the individual findings reveal about changes in concentration? Individual concentration levels over 1978–90 show (like the analysis at the state level) a trend toward tighter informal districts. Since neither deputies' seniority nor their ages bears any relationship to vote concentration, it appears that the driving force behind the increases in concentration might be changes in the kinds of people who go into politics.

Thus I turn to the final piece of the evolution puzzle—that is, the occupational mix of new entrants. Consider first those candidates who have business backgrounds but lack any experience in state or local politics. Such “pure business” candidates constituted only 5.8 percent of seat winners in 1978, but that number rose to 15 percent by 1990, with a slight decline in 1994. Candidates whose political experience was limited to local politics declined steadily through 1990, falling from 9.3 percent in 1978 to 3.9 percent in 1990, then jumped sharply, to 10.7 percent in 1994. Deputies with backgrounds in any kind of bureaucracy climbed from 33.1 percent in 1978 to 44 percent in 1990, then fell almost by half in 1994. Deputies with experience in state politics fell until 1994: 40 percent in 1978, 35.7 percent in 1986, 32 percent in 1990, 40.6 percent in 1994.

If occupational background is the central determinant of campaign tactics, these changes, largely a reflection of the increased importance of money in campaigning, ought to lead to lower levels of both concentration and domination,

because the ascendant career types are more likely to receive scattered and shared support. Domination has indeed fallen, and its decline is matched by gains in business and bureaucratic deputies in each individual region.¹¹ Concentration, by contrast, shows no trend, even though the same occupational types reducing domination tend to campaign in wider areas. Why the difference? Some new seat winners inherit old bailiwicks and stick with them. Others simply find it profitable to adapt to their state's modal pattern. And still others decide to begin their legislative careers by mounting a concentrated campaign, while anticipating that over time they will diversify. Overall, then, the logic of Brazil's electoral system yields to new entrants' vote-sharing tendencies but overcomes their propensity for vote scattering.

Conclusion

Chapter 2's models demonstrated that domination and concentration, the two central dimensions of vote distributions, influence Brazilian deputies' campaign strategies. This chapter asked why domination and concentration vary across states and individuals. Domination is higher in the Northeast. Because economic measures of poverty and underdevelopment fail to explain domination nearly as well as the simple regional dummy variable, the Northeast seems truly to be a unique area. Its uniqueness may result from two interacting traditions: the high level of families with political traditions and the prevalence of pork-barrel politics. Concentration, by contrast, proved to be lower in the Northeast, lower where large fractions of state populations live in the capital city, and higher where the number of municipalities is greater. In other words, demographic factors were more successful in explaining the spatial concentration of deputies' vote distributions.

To facilitate interpretation of these state-level findings, the analysis then moved to the level of the individual deputy. Dominant politicians stay in the legislature longer, more often begin their careers in state and local politics, and more frequently live in the Northeast. Politicians with concentrated vote patterns are more likely to have local backgrounds rather than careers in state politics, bureaucracy, or business.

Domination is falling everywhere, while concentration seems stable. At the same time, the occupational mix of new congressional contestants is also changing. There are more deputies with business and bureaucratic backgrounds

11. Domination should also decline as the number of candidates rise in each municipality.

but fewer local and state politicians. This changing occupational mix, itself a consequence of the rising importance of campaign money, contributes to the decline of electoral domination. Because concentrated electoral distributions are advantageous to deputies, new contestants gradually adopt veterans' campaign tactics.