

Partisans and bureaucrats: A Bolsa Familia Case Study

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Abstract

The impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 brought about significant changes in policy administration after her vice-president, Michel Temer, took office. Temer promoted an agenda of budgetary cuts and reduction in social welfare policies instituted by the Workers' Party (PT) administrations such as the Bolsa Familia Program (PBF). Established during PT presidencies, the program was politically attached to their administrations and a shift in the political sphere made bureaucrats working in the program expectant of large changes in the structure of PBF. This research has conducted interviews with middle to high-ranking bureaucrats in the Ministry of Social Development to understand the possible changes in administration following a change in the political realm. It undergoes an analysis that considers the relationship between bureaucrats and politicians, concluding that Temer did not promote substantial changes to the PBF's original policy goals. Instead, Temer maintained the number of beneficiaries, readjusted the value of the benefit and promoted parallel programs in conjunction with PBF. The interviews suggest that the program was able to sustain its original policy goals for its capillarity, social recognition, and bureaucratic spirit de corps.

Introduction

On 12th March 2016, President Dilma Rousseff, from the Workers' Party (PT), stepped down from office after a contentious impeachment process and is replaced by her vice-president, Michel Temer, from the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). Shifting alliances to the center-right parties, Michel Temer's new administration promoted an agenda of budgetary cuts and reduction in social welfare policies left by the PT administration such as the Bolsa Familia Program (PBF). (Holland 2019; Ferreira Silva 2019). Created during and largely associated with the PT, PBF is a conditional cash transfer program with the objective of alleviating poverty and extreme poverty in Brazil. With a shift in the political discourse, bureaucrats that worked in the program expected it deviate from its original policy objectives. This research conducted semi-structured interviews with middle and high-ranking bureaucrats in the National Secretariat for Citizenship Income (Senarc) within the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) to explore to what extent a change in partisan politics affected the federal management of the Bolsa Familia Program.

This case study is located in the field of public administration, where the clash of interests between the bureaucracy and politicians are considered. This study sees politicians as becoming increasingly bureaucratized and bureaucrats becoming more politicized, creating hybrid actors that exceed their prescribed roles (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981). Understanding their hybrid roles allows for a broader analysis of the different engagements of bureaucrats and politicians to the policy at hand. The Brazilian bureaucracy has a history of creating "pockets of efficiency" where presidencies politically insulate bureaucratic agencies to ensure that they are not corrupted by clientelism (Evans 1993; Geddes 1990). During the PT governments, Bolsa Familia established itself as one of these pockets of efficiency by being integrated by a professional bureaucracy protected from external political influence. This research is the first to explore the effects of a

change in political scenario in the functioning of the Brazilian “archipelago of excellence” (Bersch, Praça, and Taylor 2017). Previous research has analyzed the role of middle and high-level bureaucrats in the management of PBF during the PT governments but has not yet explored the impact of the Temer administration of the functioning of the program (Andrade and Lima-Silva 2016; V. Oliveira and Lotta 2015). This research explores the administrative-bureaucratic changes in the program during the Temer administration to understand the relationship between bureaucrats and politicians during periods of political change.

Unlike expected by Senarc bureaucrats, this research finds that the Temer administration did not make alterations in the program as to politically deviate it from its original objectives. Temer’s administration showed commitment to the maintenance of the program by continuing the same average number of families in the program, readjusting the value of the benefit, and taking a zero-waiting line posture for those who had not entered the program yet. The minister appointed by Temer to head the MDS, Osmar Terra, promoted a change in discourse from an emphasis on including families into the program to focusing on the exclusion of beneficiaries. This move placed political priority in combating frauds through rigorous auditing taskforces and targeting the productive inclusion of families through the creation of parallel federal programs. The reasons attributed by Senarc bureaucrats to the regular maintenance of the program during Temer’s presidency were the Bolsa Familia’s extensive bureaucratic structure and its attendance to a real social need from the population. PBF’s decentralized administration gives the program capillarity and stability because any changes in the federal level can directly affect governance in the municipal level. The program’s size, providing benefits to 1 out of 5 Brazilians, and proven efficiency make it politically costly to make any big alterations in the program (R. Oliveira and Brandão 2016). The study also identified the presence of a technically competent and socially

aligned bureaucrat staff in the Senarc that was able to effectively respond to political alterations in the program.

Literature review

The Bolsa Familia Program (PBF) is a conditional cash transfer program targeted at populations in and below the official poverty line with the objective of immediate relief of poverty and improving the access of Brazilian citizens to basic rights. It is conditional because the monthly money transfer is conditioned upon the beneficiary meeting certain educational and health actions. If the family has children, they have to be regularly enrolled in school with certain attendance criteria and, among other health conditionalities, must be vaccinated according to the program established by the Ministry of Health. Beneficiaries are given an average of R\$180 reais per month as long as they are meeting the conditions established by the program (Paiva, Falcão, and Bartholo 2013). In a period of over fifteen years of existence, PBF has targeted 13.8 million families which corresponds to a quarter of the Brazilian population, while spending 0.44% of the Brazilian GDP (R. Oliveira and Brandão 2016; Souza et al. 2018). The Program aims at the social inclusion of Brazilian citizens through the intersectorality between education, health and social assistance as well as the decentralized administration of the program's capacities to all federal states. Since 2004, PBF has been managed by the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) who implements the monthly payment of families, develops the program's administration, and articulates actions between the several state spheres. It is the responsibility of municipalities to gather information and register the beneficiaries in the national registry for social programs of the federal government (Cadastro Único), while the state level is responsible for organizing the program's local implementation. The parallel development of the Cadastro Único was paramount for the

identification of beneficiaries in PBF; it has 27 million registered families (representing 74 million people), being 13,7 million beneficiaries of the program (52%) (Chaves et al. 2018).

In 2016, Brazilian politics suffered from periods of intense crisis with the charges faced by President Rousseff for economic mismanagement of public funds that led to her impeachment later that year. The so called 'pedaladas fiscais', the heterodox management of public accounts, were used by her political opponents to promote a wave of protests and political polarization that culminated in the President's impeachment (Abranches 2018). Her political landfall strengthened the MDB a centrist party that had one of its oldest members, Michel Temer, as president in exercise. Creating a broad political base formed of opposition parties to the PT government, Michel Temer distributed his political influence by placing figures of PMBD's "condominium of power" in high ranking executive positions (Abranches 2018, 179). This represented a shift from Dilma Rousseff's centre-left populism to a right-leaning form of oligarchic power shaped by the political convenience of years of coalitions with parties along diverse ideological spectrums. After taking office, President Temer announced he does not "preach the elimination of the Bolsa Família Program" and in fact would maintain and extend the benefit to families in need (Brito 2018). Temer announced, in 2017, a R\$ 3 billion microcredit program for families benefited by the program that also counted with special access to technical courses from federal institutes (Barreto 2017). After two years without increasing the average benefit awarded by PBF, Temer promoted a 12.5% increase in the benefit (O Globo 2016).

PBF is a contested program for its political adoption by President Lula da Silva and the PT during his time in office. Therefore, a variety of sources analyzed the political relationship between Bolsa Família and the Worker's Party to understand their electoral outcomes. Recent scholarship does not agree whether the voting patterns of beneficiaries of the program were skewed in favour of the

Worker's Party (Licio, Rennó, and Castro 2009; Almeida Junior and Souza 2015; Maciel et al. 2017). The selection of variables and use of incomplete data have produced different conclusions among sources analyzing the political effects of Bolsa Familia. Due to its political contestation, the effectiveness of the program has been scrutinized by a variety of sources. Analyzing the program from different angles, these articles conclude that the program has effectively reduced poverty, increased the attendance of children in school, and have improved the quality of family diets (A. Carvalho, Almeida, and Jaime 2014; C. Carvalho and Marques 2014; Chitolina, Foguel, and Menezes-Filho 2016; Coelho and Melo 2017). Literature on the program has shown that it has successfully reached low-income Brazilians along the social assistance dimensions of health, education, and income.

Despite its decentralized nature, the program's management and setting of objectives are still the task of the federal level bureaucracy. A few studies have focused on the construction of the program through the developments of the acting bureaucracy within it. Andrade and Lima-Silva have studied the changes in high-level federal bureaucracy during the first years of the Bolsa Familia program (Andrade and Lima-Silva 2016). The authors argue that the creation of PBF was marked with conflict and tension among the political groups within the ministry competing for a part in the decision-making process. Oliveira and Lotta focus on the historical path of Bolsa Familia and its construction by middle level bureaucrats to claim that the program has created an island of bureaucratic efficiency that was shielded from political decisions throughout its creation (V. Oliveira and Lotta 2015). This bureaucratic insulation was positive for the program during its inception, which brought in articulation between different federal ministries, but can be seen as deleterious in the long term because its policies start to favour the maintenance of the bureaucratic status quo.

The relationship between politics and bureaucracy is a classic conflict in political science and has been analyzed by authors as far as Max Weber and Woodrow Wilson. Weber saw that the bureaucracy must not only develop the rationalizing activity of the state, but also must guarantee the public sense of the state by producing the best administrative procedures through its technical expertise and guaranteeing the neutral legitimacy of the state (Weber 2019). The bureaucracy is distinct from the public for its technical knowledge about policy production and is inspected by the legislative power, who is able to approve the budget and alter macro bureaucratic decisions (Weber 1993). The author sees the relationship between politics and administration as complementary and conflicted because bureaucrats must be given the autonomy to use their technical knowledge in the administration of the state as long as this power is followed by controls that avoid the creation of a technocracy. On the other hand, Wilson saw politics and administration as inherently complementary when a functional division exists between them. Wilson argued that it is the task of politics, defined by the electoral process, to establish the administrative priorities for the state, while the bureaucracy implements general directives through their technical knowledge and is protected by the interference of politicians by universal laws and meritocratic access to public service (Wilson 1955).

Earlier authors considered bureaucracies as Weberian types; where administrative procedure is maintained rational and neutral through the use of hierarchical meritocratic structures of organization. However, later authors like Michel Crozier indicate that the bureaucracy does not fulfill the rationality of its complex administrative structure and creates niches of uncertainty (Crozier 2010). These territories of uncertainty open bureaucratic organizations to internal power struggles that are corrected through informal rules and procedures established by bureaucrats themselves. Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman advance the claim that bureaucracies are politicized

by showing that in contemporary democracies politicians involve themselves increasingly in technical matters while bureaucrats become policy makers because, beyond their technical expertise, they develop political capacities to articular demands and negotiate consensus when different interests are in conflict (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981). The authors maintain that contemporary democracies are bureaucratizing politics and politicizing bureaucracy, making the two groups adopt a hybrid strategy of work. Svara argues along a similar vein by emphasizing the complementarity of politics and bureaucracy due to their common pursuit of “sound governance” (Svara 2001, 179). The complementarity of these two groups recognizes the interdependence and reciprocal influence between elected officials and bureaucrats that promotes accountability to the public undergirded by the technical responsibility of administrators.

Early analyses of the Brazilian bureaucracy, such as the one made by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, focused on the negative influence that the realm of politics had on the functioning of the Brazilian state. The author described the Brazilian bureaucracy as operating in ‘bureaucratic rings’ of influence where privileged groups could insert themselves within the state in order to serve them (Cardoso 1974). This effect created direct channels of influence from particular interests into the functioning of the Brazilian state, which functioned by the cooptation of a limited civil society ignorant of its autonomous political force. Similarly, Martins argued that the bureaucracy aligns with the capitalist class in Brazil in order to favour its expansion of which the state’s power is based on (Martins 1985). Thus, the bureaucracy is mobilized to guarantee the access of private interests to the state as well as itself has the interest of interacting with the capitalist class in order to appropriate specific groups.

As a form to counter-balance the clientelism established by bureaucratic rings, a succession of Brazilian presidents – starting with Getúlio Vargas with his Departamento Administrativo do

Serviço Público (DASP), Juscelino Kubitchek, and the military generals – insulated specific bureaucratic departments in order to create “islands of rationality” (Nunes 1997, 34). This political insulation protected some bureaucratic nuclei from particular interests allowing the protection of technical niches working on priority policy. Working from a similar perspective, Evans argues that elites created “pockets of efficiency” within the Brazilian bureaucracy in order to modernize the state structures through a gradual process of policy development (Evans 1993, N/A). This allowed the political elites to avoid the arena controlled by political parties in order to guarantee the autonomous implementation of the policy priorities in government (Bresser-Pereira 1997). According to Geddes, bureaucratic insulation does not imply a lack of responsiveness to popular demands or interest groups. Rather there is a “semipermeable membrane” that surrounds insulated bureaucracies that preserves the organizational integrity and goals of the bureaucracy, but also allow it to gain resources and information from society (Geddes 1990, 220). Authors have traced an “archipelago of excellence” among the Brazilian bureaucratic apparatus; where agencies show a greater degree of autonomy and technical expertise due to their political insulation (Bersch, Praça, and Taylor 2017).

Theory and hypothesis

The Bolsa Familia Program maintained a steady path development through its inception in the Lula administration to its solidification and growth in the Dilma administration. Previous research has analyzed the role of medium and high-level bureaucrats in the period in which the Workers Party was in office but yet has not explored the influence a change in administration might have in the governance of the program (V. Oliveira and Lotta 2015; Andrade and Lima-Silva 2016). This research explores the possible change in governance patterns in PBF given the change of presidency from Dilma Rousseff to Michel Temer, when the former vice-president created a

coalition of opposition parties that broke the alliance with the Workers Party. It analyzes how the alteration in partisan politics can influence the management and behaviour of bureaucrats operating a high priority social policy program.

State management refers to the conditions that allow the unobstructed practice of bureaucrats within workers' roles as prescribed by law. This research adopts the same definition of bureaucratic capacity as Bersch et. al; where a professional bureaucracy with the ability to implement policy works free of external influences (Bersch, Praça, and Taylor 2017). The bureaucracy is free from particularistic pressures that might jeopardize the impersonal or universalistic implementation of policy. A change in state management can be identified through budget changes, number of employed bureaucrats, external-to-department hindrances to execute tasks and agenda setting. The management of the state can also be found in the informal and social ties created by bureaucrats in the formations of procedures within the creation of a social policy. While bureaucrats are responsible for the administration of the state, partisan actors like elected officials and political party members promote direct and indirect interventions on the practice of administration. These actors divert the policy interest towards their particular representative goals to promote institutional changes that favor a specific interest group.

Given its successful historical path shielded from political interference, the Bolsa Familia Program can be considered an 'island of rationality' within the Brazilian bureaucracy. Its initial political formation was marked by a strong political insulation created by the Workers Party to protect the program from clientelist deviations of its original objectives. Soon the program developed a bureaucratic ethos along its social categories that bound a highly technical and experienced personnel to the development of PBF. This created a group of articulator bureaucrats that expanded the program's reach through informal connections and partnerships with other ministries. Despite

its political contention, Bolsa Familia established itself as an effective decentralized and intersectoral social policy supported by an experienced staff of bureaucrats. Due to PBF's strong path dependency, this article argues that partisan politics affected minimally the federal state management of the Bolsa Familia program after the shift from Dilma Rousseff to Michel Temer's Presidency in Brazil. Despite the ideological change in political actors, the program will not be affected by major political decisions because of its experienced bureaucracy and technical proof of its effectiveness. The "bureaucratic ossification" found among middle ranking bureaucrats in PBF during the PT administration will strengthen the program from political deviations (V. Oliveira and Lotta 2015).

Research design

In order to explore the effects of a change in administration on the management of the Bolsa Familia Program this article used a semi-structured format to interview 10 high and middle-level bureaucrats from the Senarc that managed the program during and after the shift from Dilma Rousseff to the Michel Temer administration. Interviewees were asked how they evaluated the functioning of the program during the Dilma administration and then following into the Temer administration. They were asked what their expectations with regards to the Temer administration and they evaluated whether political influence in the Bolsa Familia Program occurred following a switch in administrations. Interviewees were also asked the reasons why political influence occurred or not during the two periods analyzed. This selection of questions allows the researcher to create a chronology of the possible interference of the Temer administration in the administration of the Bolsa Familia Program.

The literature is not consistent with what characterizes a high and middle ranking bureaucrat, sometimes defining middle level bureaucrats as being from positions *Direção e Assessoramento*

Superior (DAS) 1 to 5, and others considering high level bureaucrats as positions DAS 4 to 6 (Pires 2018; Loureiro and Abrucio 1999). This research interviewed bureaucrats from DAS 3, 4 and 5 therefore ranging from middle to high level bureaucrats in its interview pool. The interviewees were selected according to their involvement in the direct administration of the program during the period studied.

Analysis

The Bolsa Familia Program emerged from the Lula da Silva administration as a consolidated social policy program connected to the figure of the president and to PT. With his campaign objective of eradicating hunger and poverty, President Lula treated the program as key a priority; seen in the program's bureaucratic insulation during his administration (interviewee 2). PBF was implemented in the federal level by a team of professional bureaucrats with experience in the management of social policy, producing a social program in alignment with the PT administration's objectives (interviewee 2). As a political successor to Lula da Silva, Dilma Rousseff entered office promising to eradicate extreme poverty through an intersectoral program called Brasil Sem Miséria (BSM) that targeted beneficiaries of the Bolsa Familia Program. Her political alignment with the objectives of the program allowed for the expansion of PBF by providing financial complements to beneficiaries who even receiving the benefit had shown not to be able to surpass the extreme poverty line. Her administration marked a focus on the program's third strategic piece, the promotion of complementary actions, by creating Brasil Carinhoso, a program for beneficiaries focused on strategies of first infancy. The minister at the time, Teresa Campello, "dove into all technical aspects of the program" by providing an "active posture in support of the program" (interviewee 5). The Senarc was provided "certain autonomy in administration and support from the government" during the Dilma administration given their

positive relationship with the minister's cabinet (interviewee 5). In this period of "institutional peace", all the demands pointed out by Senarc were promptly taken as priority by the Dilma administration (interviewee 9; interviewee 4). Bureaucrats had the political capital to pressure Caixa to provide a better payment structure to the program because they knew PT administration was supporting the program (interviewee 9). This allowed for multiple readjustments in the value of the benefit, a change in structure of benefits of the program, and the creation of an 'active seeking' strategy for the inclusion of new families into the program (interviewee 4).

President Dilma Rousseff's second administration was marked by economic pressures, political turbulence, and a drastic fall in popularity. This instability led to a lot of discomfort among Senarc staff because the political scenario looked like it could change at any time (interviewee 7). It was always a program highly sought after by the media and the political upheaval brought a greater preoccupation to maintain the program under its original objectives (interviewee 7). The budgetary pressure became more intense throughout her administration, leading to the inflation of food products and a need to readjust the value of the average benefit given. However, the promised readjustments never occurred following pressures from the finance ministry, which limited the reach of the program by influence of the budgetary aims (interviewee 4). Dilma's administration was unable to make major changes to the program due to her presidency's political erosion during her second term in office (interviewee 6). This political ossification limited the possibilities of innovation in the program and became a barrier for any new project (interviewee 6). As exemplified by one of the interviewees, the alternative provision of the benefit to indigenous peoples was barred during her administration and the financial education initiative was stalled until its execution in 2018 (interviewee 6).

With the transition from Dilma Rousseff to Michel Temer in August of 2016, the Senarc staff expected there would be significant changes in the structure of the program (interviewee 2; interviewee 10). Their understanding was that the Temer administration would slowly mischaracterize the program by promoting gradual structural changes to PBF (interviewee 6; interviewee 9). Despite arriving with new ideas, the new administration never discussed the extinction of the program (interviewee 4). Rather, Temer proposed a new political discourse that emphasized on the exclusion of beneficiaries instead of their inclusion, which was considered as a discourse of the previous administration (interviewee 4). The process of inclusion and exclusion of families is a routine process in the administration of the program since families enter and exit the official poverty lines. However, the focus of the Temer administration on exclusion showed a redirection towards the removal of families from the program. This change in discourse led to a “more tense and complicated” management of the program given the expectation that profound changes could be enacted by the new administration making the program deviate from its original objectives (interviewee 4). The Senarc transition team prepared the transition papers with the data and processes required for the maintenance of PBF in hopes that it would be taken with rigour by the new administration. In the last day of the Dilma administration, most secretaries including the minister and commissioned roles in the ministry were exonerated from their roles, marking the shift to Temer’s period in office.

One month after Temer takes office, a new readjustment in the benefit is announced; fulfilling what Dilma Rousseff had not been able to implement because of a change in the budgetary aims. The newly appointed minister, Osmar Terra, promotes Temer’s discourse of exclusion of families from the program by creating a ‘Fine Comb’ operation to analyze whether there are people unduly receiving the benefits. This operation was undertaken with the joint efforts of the chamber of fight

against corruption in the Public Ministry (MP), associated with the Car Wash Operation, that affirmed in a report that municipal governments were acting with too much leniency when accepting recipients of the benefits thus allowing more families than supposed to into the program. The Senarc staff later analyzed the report presented and found several fragilities in its execution (interviewee 4). The information was leaked to the press, which generated great political pressure on the program to remove unduly beneficiaries (Jornal do Comércio 2016). The General Controllershship of the Union (CGU) and the Audit Tribunal of the Union (TCU), two auditing agencies that audited the program yearly, came to the support of the program in the media (interviewee 4). In response to the report, Osmar Terra creates a Ministerial Work Group (GTI) to analyze the possible frauds indicated by the MP. The expectation of the Osmar Terra team was to find “a swiss cheese, full of faults” in the program’s execution but only verified that the program was in check with its registry verifications (interviewee 4). The political pressure mounted by the MP’s report resulted in the enhancement of the verification and exclusion processes that started to occur not only following the benefit provision but now also before its processing (interviewee 4). The verification process began to be executed monthly rather than every semester, having a group of 600,000 families leaving the program in the first verification (interviewee 4).

The new administration entered office with great mistrust between Senarc bureaucrats and politicians (interviewee 5). Many projects spent up to six months on hold while the new administration got acquainted with the resources and partnerships the program had acquired (interviewee 5). The minister Osmar Terra announced the objective of zeroing the wait lines for the benefit of the program with the objective of bringing new families that have the program’s profile. This led to a success of eight months of zeroing the families waiting to receive the benefit while simultaneously increasing budgetary pressures (MDS 2018). With a greater focus in the

quantitative aspect of included families, the Temer administration did not emphasize on the intersectoral management of the program with other ministries and organizations (interviewee 1). This manifested in actions that supported direct interventions and national programs rather than horizontal administration between ministries (interviewee 1). Minister Osmar Terra devised the Criança Feliz program, a project created to support the needs of children in first infancy that initially targeted families receiving the PBF benefit. Subsequently, Temer's administration created the Progredir program, a microcredit support for small entrepreneurs targeted to Brazilians in the Cadastro Único. These two projects signal the Temer's administration agenda of productive inclusion, which is the incentivization of families to enter the labour market, promoted by the discourse that Bolsa Familia creates a 'laziness effect' on its beneficiaries (interviewee 4). As argued by one of the bureaucrats, objectives of productive inclusion attribute to the program a responsibility it does not originally have so efforts were taken by the Senarc staff to initially signalize that these interventions would have to be done outside the program (interviewee 4).

With the launch of the programs created by the Temer administration, the perception of Senarc bureaucrats is that the secretariat was placed in a secondary role in the ministry (interviewee 2). Tiago Falcão, the secretary of the Senarc at the time, and minister Osmar Terra had a "tense and distant relationship" as a result of the demands by the minister to make certain alterations in the program that were pushed back by the secretary "with numbers, researches, studies to say it should not be that way" (interviewee 2). Tiago Falcão was one of the few secretaries to remain in the ministry following the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. Given the task to make the transition between the two governments, the secretary ended up remaining in his role all throughout the Temer administration and represented a maintenance in the leadership of the Senarc despite a change in government (interviewee 6). "Rigorous in his limits"; the secretary ensured

that any changes done to the program would have to be consistent with its objectives by providing informed reports on policy alternatives that fit the new political discourse (interviewee 2; interviewee 4).

The Senarc bureaucrats point towards the structure of the program when asked why the program was not affected as expected during the Temer administration. PBF has over 300,000 people working directly or indirectly for it among federal bureaucrats, municipal coordinators, social assistants and many other civil servants (interviewee 4). The big structure of the program, that assists 1 in every 5 Brazilians, allows it to have capillarity and stability since any change could affect a large parcel of the most vulnerable population in the country (interviewee 2; R. Oliveira and Brandão 2016). Despite being a small federal secretariat, Senarc manages the program through decentralized administration that makes any change in the federal level passive of affecting the municipalities directly. Since the program is a monthly benefit with conditionalities, it is present in the day-to-day life of millions of beneficiaries who are sensitive to changes in the structure of payments (interviewee 2). Bolsa Familia counts with an extremely broad legal framework that define exactly how the rules of the program work (interviewee 3). This protects it from deviating politically from its core objective of alleviating extreme poverty through conditional cash transfers. Another element pointed out by the interviewees is the support the program provides in response to a real socioeconomic need of the population (interviewee 2). Bolsa Familia fills the gap between the state and those in need by providing a real incentive for the fulfillment of the conditionalities required by the program. The effectiveness of the program in combating this real need reflects in its positive appreciation by other bureaucratic agencies like the CGU and in partnerships created with international organizations such as the World Bank.

A greater influence was not observed in the Bolsa Familia's management during the administration of Michel Temer because it was staffed with a "capable and professional bureaucracy ready to answer to incoming challenges" (interviewee 4). Many bureaucrats, including those interviewed, are long time public servants who have worked in the program since its early inception. This has created a strong *spirit de corps* among Senarc staff who identify with policies aimed at reducing social inequality and share a "marked social outlook" that aligns their goals with the program's objectives (interviewee 2).

With a technically competent staff, Senarc administered the changes proposed by the Temer administration by "absorbing, digesting, and presenting changes in a new way" that fit the presidency's political discourse (interviewee 7). As mentioned by one of the interviewees, "we celebrated more in this period with what did not get done with what effectively got done" (interviewee 4). Senarc bureaucrats showed a strong commitment to the rules and normative framework of the program; affirming it "generates legitimacy" of the program among the population (interviewee 2). The Senarc team adapted to the new political scenario by adopting a posture of "presenting proposals that were satisfactory for the higher management and still protect the program" (interviewee 7). Despite a series of mistrusts against the new administration, the Senarc bureaucracy had the flexibility to understand that it was working in a new environment with another leadership (interviewee 10).

Conclusion

Bolsa Familia was launched and established itself as a successful conditional cash transfer program combating extreme poverty during the years of PT administration in Brazil. As a decentralized program, it delegates responsibilities to states and municipalities according to the priorities set by the federal administration. The Senarc, a secretariat formed for the management of the program,

is responsible for the intersectoral coordination between ministries, administering the benefit's payroll and tracking the number of beneficiaries through frauds or potential new families. Presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff's strategy to politically insulate the management of the program were successful in ensuring that it would not deviate from its original policy goals. This strategy allowed the emergence of a bureaucratic staff in the Senarc committed to ensuring the objectives of the program through the use of their technical expertise. Following the impeachment process, Michel Temer, the former vice-president who turned into the government opposition, took office with a different strategic agenda from Dilma Rousseff. Built on a coalition of center-right parties, the president promoted stringent fiscal adjustments through cuts in social spending. The change in political environment made Senarc bureaucrats apprehensive of the new administration promoting changes that aimed at decharacterizing the program.

This research has shown that, unlike expected by Senarc bureaucrats, the Temer administration did not make substantial alterations in the program during the two years of his presidency. Switching the discourse from inclusions to an emphasis on exclusions of beneficiaries, the Temer administration promoted greater auditing in the program with the 'Fine Comb' operation and targeted the productive inclusion of beneficiaries through parallel federal government programs like Progridir. The president showed a commitment to maintaining the program by readjusting the value of the benefit twice, adopting a zero-waiting line posture, and preserving the number of beneficiaries attended by PBF. Senarc bureaucrats attributed the maintenance of the program during the Temer administration to the positive results and structure of PBF. There is large consensus among researchers that Bolsa Familia has been an effective social policy program in relieving poverty and extreme poverty in Brazil (Falcão Silva 2018). The program serves a large proportion of the Brazilian population and counts with thousands of administrations spread across

the country, giving it stability for its capillarity with the public. PBF counts with international partnerships and support from other federal bureaucratic departments like the CGU. Its size and success make the implementation of structural changes from a federal level politically costly to any partisan actor. The fact that the program responds to a real necessity from the population also factors in its legitimacy among citizens and importance for the advancement of state social policies in Brazil.

Another important element identified in this research for the maintenance of Bolsa Familia during the Temer administration was the establishment in the Senarc of a professional bureaucracy with a *strong spirit de corps* capable of responding technically to alterations in the program. Along its years of political insulation during the PT administrations, the Senarc staff developed a technical proficiency and knowledge of the program that aligns strongly with the program's original objectives. The Senarc staff showed a strong level of commitment to the functioning of the program because bureaucrats developed an attachment and identified with the social priorities put forward by PBF. The Bolsa Familia Program reveals the success of a social policy initiated and expanded with an insulated bureaucracy that developed technical expertise and social recognition with the program's goals. This allowed for creation of a program with capillarity and effectiveness that, alongside a dedicated bureaucracy, was able to maintain Bolsa Familia's functioning without deviating from its original objectives during a period of political change.

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