

How Does A Social Problem Convert To Public Policy?

An Analytical Study On The Implementation Of Emergency Aid In Brazil

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Abstract: Introduction: How does a social problem become part of the government's agenda? In order to answer this research question, this paper aims to verify the process of implementing Emergency Aid in 2020. It is a social policy of basic income transfer to be carried out by the federal government of Brazil during the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus. **Procedures:** The study has an explanatory character, using qualitative and quantitative data from secondary sources, with emphasis on documentary analysis of public legislation. **Results:** The results point to the plural relations of diffuse power between social actors (population, media and international community), political actors (legislators and the federal government) and economic actors (market and investors) in the public negotiation arena in democratic societies; furthermore, the political ideology of parties and rulers has shown little influence on the government's public policy agenda, **Discussion:** In situations of socioeconomic crises in which the political survival of the leader may require the implementation of distributive social policies, governments might change intensively the political platform, such as administrative attempts to rescue popular support and provide governability to the president.

Keywords: *Emergencial Aid. Public policy. Agenda Setting. Political Survival.*

I. Introduction

In 2020, the pandemic caused by the Coronavirus produced in Brazil a scenario of very particular socioeconomic instability and which will require a considerable range of studies to assess the real impact of the global health crisis in different spheres of social life in the country. In light of this, this paper seeks to analyze the recent national political context to explain how President Jair Bolsonaro's

government agenda (without a party) was constituted for public policies aimed at the social protection of the population, through an analytical study on the process of formulating and implementation of Emergency Aid, the main political and social action of the Brazilian government in its first biennium.

Thus, several studies on the public policy cycle establish fundamental foundations for institutional learning and models for analyzing the different political moments between the formation of an agenda, formulation and implementation of government actions (Jenkins, 1978; Sabatier, 2007; Lindblom, 2014; Kingdow, 2011; Howlett, Ramesh & Perl, 2013; Heidemann & Salm, 2014; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). For this reason, interpreting the national scenario from the focus on public policies may produce understanding and knowledge of the recent prospects of Brazil's political dynamics.

To this end, this paper initially discusses the contemporary perspectives for thinking about the formation of the public policy agenda (agenda setting), in the face of moments of socioeconomic and also political crises, as is the case in Brazil in 2020. Next, we seek to describe how the adoption of social policies can become an administrative strategy for political survival and the rescue of popular support in times of government instability, in addition to functioning as a bargaining chip between different social, economic and political actors in the public policy market. pluralistic and democratic societies (Dahl, 2005; Downs, 2013; Andrade, 2018; Natalino & Pinheiro, 2020).

In order to discuss the formation of the agenda and the formulation of policies, from the focus on distributive mechanisms, the legislative arena of disputes and policy negotiation was subsequently analyzed, starting from the implementation of Emergency Aid in 2020, as the main State resource to build a social protection system for citizens in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability during the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus, in addition to

being also a significant mechanism for political survival.

II. Agenda setting of policies

In order to think about the contemporary process of establishing public policies, one must first understand the macro-structural conception of a metainstitutional arrangement, that is, the political and economic behaviors of social actors are based on the principles of capitalism and democracy (HOWLETT, RAMESH & PERL, 2013). It is from this macro condition that the formation of the public policy agenda and its models of approach to these processes can be analyzed. These are essential fundamentals to understand the preponderant dynamics of governmental actions to meet the demands and needs of the population or interest groups.

For Thomas Dye (2011, p.5), public policies must be understood as “everything that a government decides to do or not to do”, however, these decisions involve a plural arena of social, economic and political interests and actors. Thus, in the process of formulating public policies, society's problems are contextualized and taken to the government to resolve, state institutions organize consensual alternatives and select possible solutions that should be implemented, evaluated and reviewed. Therefore, in order to understand this political process more broadly, information about the objectives and perceptions of the actors involved in the problem situation is obviously required (Sabatier, 2007).

In this perspective, Jenkins (1978, p.8) defines public policies as “a set of interrelated decisions, taken by an actor or group of political actors, and which concern the selection of objectives and the means necessary to achieve them”. In this way, the entire governmental decision process is directly related to the political strength of other actors or groups of actors, therefore, the delimitation of objectives and means for political action must be linked to the satisfaction of multiple interests.

For Howlett, Ramesh and Perl (2013), the actors that are part of the political decision-making process are the elected politicians of the executive and the legislature, the voters, the government bureaucrats, the political parties of situation and opposition, the groups of interest, the media, technical experts and the international system, since international agreements and external pressure groups may also affect the formulation of national public policies. In summary,

liberal democracy and capitalism add actors, institutions and particular ideas to the process of forming a public agenda, which make them central elements of this dynamic, in other words, they are political-administrative subsystems, with their own actors, specific institutions and interested ideas.

Table 1 - Simplification of the Public Policy Process

Sets of Elements	1. Actors, interest groups, agencies, legislators, researchers, journalists and lawyers	Values, interests and perceptions in the formation of preferences
	2. Time periods of a decade or more	Public policy cycle
	3. Domain or subsystem of public policy	Programs of different levels of government operation
	4. Policy debates between actors	Legislative hearings, technical disputes and administrative regulations
	5. Values, interests, financial resources and authoritarian coercion	Distortion of situations for particular advantages

Source: Sabatier (2007, p.3)

In an attempt to produce a simplification of the elements that involve the process of planning and building public policies, Chart 1 demonstrates the complexity and interrelation of crucial decisions about the realization of the governmental idea. It is a public arena of disputes of interests in the formation of particular preferences and coercion of groups for the most appropriate policy design institutionally.

Kingdon (2011) centralizes his theoretical reflections in the moments that precede the decision-making process, by emphasizing the procedures relatively neglected by more linear views of the public policy cycle. Faced with plural influences on political choice, government actors and interest groups organize the agenda for the implementation of projects with public effects. “In practice, few policies are created ex nihilo, it is usually about policy innovations that already exist in other communities. Therefore, the new policies tend to be syntheses of incremental one-off adjustments in their majority” (Oliveira, 2017, p.105).

In practice, a social problem enters the government's planning agenda due to the existence of programs and projects already in other stages of implementation, therefore, the incremental character of most public policies. Thus, the importance of

understanding that even in times of social emergency, government solutions tend to arise from actions already taken to some extent by the government itself or previous governments in which public policy has remained in relative execution.

For Lindblom (2014), in terms of political decision, government leaders tend to trust their previous experiences, usually marked by the smooth gradation of the implementation of past policies to predict the additional consequences of their actions, in order to reduce future uncertainties that the unfolding of policies can produce. In summary, this is what the author calls the “method of successive limited comparisons” (Lindblom, 2014, p.175), as he admits that the decision must be built continuously, step by step, and in small steps, that is, by ramescence.

Therefore, the formation of the public policy agenda becomes the first stage of the association cycle between politics and administration. In other words, what causes a social problem to become a meeting agenda and political planning for implementation may be the end result of pressure and disputes by forces of a multiple nature, that is, government action arises from larger disputes with the various actors, interest groups and public subsystems of the policy itself.

Downs (1972) proposes the agenda formation model based on the concept of “problem visibility cycle”, that is, the public policy agenda is similar to the mass media news cycle. Thus, the problems that gain public visibility tend to become government affairs at the moment when the issue collectively has received a lot of attention, requiring certain political action by the governments, in different spheres of execution.

Table 2 – The dynamics of the problem visibility cycle

The 5 stages of problem perception	1.Pre-problem stage	Existence of unwanted social conditions, such as racism and poverty
	2.Euphoric enthusiasm	Dramatic events produce enthusiasm in solving the problem
	3. Perception of the cost of significant progress	Expanding the gradual perception of the cost of solving the problem requires sacrifices from the population
	4. Gradual decline in intense public interest	There is a gradual decline in the intensity of public interest in the problem
	5. Post-problem stage	In the final stage, the problem moves from the center of public concern to a prolonged limbo

Source: Downs (1972, p.39)

The stages of perception of problems in society support a large part of the public policy agenda, since the government is unable to act in all spheres of social life at the same time, therefore, the dynamics of visibility allows certain issues to become an issue among politicians, as many problems may have been widely debated for decades in academic spheres, but they do not become government actions.

Kingdon (2011) discusses the formation of an agenda, focusing on “windows of opportunities”, when referring to the opening of spaces in the governmental agenda to transform an idea into public policy, these windows open and close according to the interaction among political actors, institutions and society, through proposals for solutions to problems common to the population. The author argues that some variables act on the agenda, called flows, initially the perception of the problem stands out as a public issue and then the experts propose solutions that in the end are accepted by politicians driven by a national feeling of urgency of the theme, this moment in which the window of opportunity appears to insert it in the formal agenda. For Neto et al., (2015), these are transitory opportunities, common in budget cycles and usually in the final moments of the electoral mandate, thus, politicians become policy entrepreneurs willing to invest time and reputation to defend a program action in exchange for future benefits.

These opportunities arise from the analysis of social indicators that demonstrate a particular special condition, requiring political action to create solutions during the term, or even situations and events such as disasters and crises that draw more attention to certain issues than to others. Thus, once a problem is considered urgent and some possible solutions have been delimited, public policy entrepreneurs invest their resources to try to convince leaders to see the condition really as a problem (Kingdon, 2011).

As defined by Dahl (2005, p.307), “competence in politics is the ability to gain more influence than others, using the same resources”, this means that in the public policy market, party strength and substantive relations with groups of interest allow the politician to intensify his actions, including the transformation of problem situations into content of the governmental agenda. And if it is possible to conceive of the political arena exactly as a political market (Downs, 2013),

public policies will be the result of interests, negotiations and consensus between legislators, that is, politicians seek to produce public policies that appeal to organized groups in society.

Therefore, it becomes valid to understand what is at stake in these negotiations in the political market, because positions, power, resources and votes become justifiable ends for the actors who wish to remain in political competition. Ideological or partisan issues present in specific government plans lose space in the political arena when they seek to offer public policies that are indispensable to obtain the support of Congress and the population. It can be said that the ideological spectrum of politicians ends up becoming a gray zone in which left or right policies can condense into actions necessary for the mandate.

For Downs (2013), in certain key sectors of the policy market, few individuals have a direct influence on the decision-making process, in contrast, citizens exert even less influence. Thus, in pluralist systems of democratic societies marked by dispersed inequalities, the direct influence of political leaders expands beyond the rules of classic models of democracy. However, "if leaders command, they are also commanded" (Downs, 2013, p.102), in a system of distribution of influences, this is just another paradox of democratic governments.

Therefore, there is a feedback chain in which public policies become the products of political exchanges, along with the job and vote market. In this perspective, legislative support is based on a dynamic somewhat different from that of the population, since the urgent need to maintain governance goes beyond the ideological prerogatives on which voters relied during the elections to decide the vote. For this reason, in situations of government crisis or legislative instability, traditionally left-wing public policies may be adopted by conservative leaders, just as economic austerity programs may form part of progressive mandates.

III. The adoption of social policies and campaign counter-discourse

In general terms, the elected politician wants to be elected again, that is, public officials wish to remain in power, regardless of the country's political regime (Downs, 2013), obviously that in democratic systems this permanence in political positions requires approval through votes during regular elections. Given this, elections allow voters to assign a vote of confidence to

the politician in his first election, or to evaluate his performance at the end of his term, rewarding him with the vote or punishing him with the choice of another candidate. In this way, all public actions of the politician are part of the voter evaluation content, as a form of accountability to citizens, supporters or not of the elected governments.

In the Brazilian case, the election of Jair Bolsonaro (without a party), for the presidency of the country during the 2019-2022 term, allows a procedural analysis of the formation of public policy agenda, as a model for verifying established assumptions of scientific studies on political behavior and the formulation of government programs. In this perspective, the elected candidate with 55.13% of the valid votes in the 2018 presidential elections, still affiliated with the PSL (Partido Liberal Social), was able to approve a government project with liberal / conservative tendencies, through strong criticisms of social policies from previous leftist governments.

The 2018 election campaign was based on ideologically intense speeches, marked by antipetist, anti-communist sentiments, against the leftist, pro-arms governmental agenda and support for the traditional values of conservative and nationalist societies. Therefore, a promise of a future agenda of liberalism, privatizations and fiscal control, in addition to socio-environmental agendas antagonistic to post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1990). Thus, supported electorally by supporters of these political conceptions for the 2019-2022 government, the then-elected president, Jair Bolsonaro, maintained the commitment in his speech to recover the Brazilian economy quickly after specific measures to control public spending and the expectation of strengthening the private investments in the internal market.

However, after fourteen months of the new government, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially announced the global pandemic condition caused by the new coronavirus (Covid-19), responsible for severe respiratory syndromes and deaths worldwide, from waves of gradual contamination to reach all nations on the planet. Thus, the Brazilian government needed to create measures to face the epidemiological crisis and, consequently, the national economic crisis, due to the need to paralyze a large part of the country's productive sphere for several months (Mello et al., 2020).

According to the Ministry of Economy (2020), Brazil's economic production has also been impacted by issues of an internal nature, since productive and commercial activities have experienced an intense

deceleration since the first social restriction measures. And from March 2020, states and municipalities implemented actions of social isolation of people and temporary closings of companies and industries. In addition, the socioeconomic uncertainty resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic meant that investments were delayed and the consumption of goods and services progressively plummeted at the national level (Ministry of Economy, 2020).

Table 3 – Measures to deal with the crisis

Economic Measures	1. Transfer of resources to the health area
	2. Aid to vulnerable population
	3. Preservation of jobs and companies
	4. Increase in liquidity for the credit market
	5. Transfer of resources to states and municipalities to balance the loss of immediate public revenue

Source: Ministry of Economy (2020)

The measures to face the health crisis and also the economic crisis demanded from the government an intense process of negotiation, planning and allocation of resources in the creation of public policies in an immediate character to avoid greater consequences for the Brazilian population.

In this way, society's efforts to avoid widespread contamination have led to a reduction in face-to-face social contact, and consequently, collective self-preservation action has further aggravated the country's economic conditions (NATALINO and PINHEIRO, 2020). Since, since 2016, the lack of public investments in economic activities and the inertia of the private sector, due to macro-political insecurity over the nearly five years, between the beginning of the second term of ex-president Dilma Russeff (PT) in 2015, and later, with his successors in the presidency, Michel Temer (MDB) from 2016 to 2018.

Because of this, as an emergency measure of social assistance to the most economically vulnerable people, the government was forced to implement financial aid that substitutes the source of income of poor Brazilians (NATALINO & PINHEIRO, 2020). The social isolation adopted by states and municipalities prevented the income of a significant portion of the population, whose informality and low income were already common even before the Covid-19 pandemic. For Mello et al., (2020), the fragile structure of the Brazilian labor market and with the rate of 40.7% (38.3 million people) of informality produced a real scenario

of enormous social vulnerability, since the impossibility for these workers to practice social isolation quarantine without any income, demanded immediate action by the politicians of the legislature and the national executive.

Among the most relevant measures adopted to face the pandemic, the creation of Emergency Aid, instituted by Law n° 13.982, of April 2, 2020, stands out. The new legislation amended Law n° 8.742 of December 7, 1993, main characterization of what was considered social vulnerability to regulate the eligibility of the benefit of continuous provision (BPC), by establishing exceptional measures of social protection for the period of confrontation with the coronavirus.

The Emergency Aid was the result of the addition of the Basic Citizenship Income - Law No. 10.835 of 2004 - and the Unemployment Insurance Program, established by Law No. 7998, of 1990. However, it is worth noting that the first program still lacked regulation federal government and the second affected only formal unemployed workers. Thus, the aid starts to function as a social protection also for informal workers, once the legal requirements are met (Cardoso, 2020). This is what the institutional literature calls "incremental change", given the difficulties of establishing a public policy project from scratch due to the political and administrative negotiation dynamics common to the cycle of policy making in democratic societies.

In the words of Mahoney and Thelen (2010, p.18), "the lack of capacity to destroy an institution, institutional challengers may be able to exploit its inherent ambiguities in order to allow them to redirect it to the most favorable functions and effects". In fact, creating a new social policy program from scratch in the midst of the pandemic would require the central government to have enormous powers of articulation, negotiation and resignations that would require time and resources. Although the Bolsonaro government still tried to create a new income transfer program, initially called "*Renda Brasil*", which was debated in the National Congress and in the media so that it could replace the "*Bolsa Família*" program, such an undertaking was unable to be successful at first.

Thus, Emergency Aid became the minimum income transfer program for *Bolsa Família* beneficiaries, and those enrolled in the Single Registry for Social Programs of the Federal Government - CadÚnico, and also covers informal workers, self-employed and individual microentrepreneurs (IME), that is, it redefines the concept of vulnerable people (Cardoso, 2020).

Art. 2 During the period of 3 (three) months, counting from the publication of this Law, emergency aid in the amount of R \$ 600.00 (six hundred reais) will be granted to the worker who cumulatively complies with the following requirements:

I- is over 18 (eighteen) years of age, save in the case of teenage mothers;

II- does not have an active formal job;

III- does not hold a social security or assistance benefit or is a beneficiary of unemployment insurance or a federal income transfer program, except, under the terms of §§ 1 and 2, Bolsa Família;

IV- whose per capita monthly family income is up to ½ (half) minimum wage or the total monthly family income is up to 3 (three) minimum wages;

V- that, in 2018, did not receive taxable income above R \$ 28,559.70 (twenty-eight thousand, five hundred and fifty-nine reais and seventy cents);

VI- who performs an activity on the condition that:

a) individual microentrepreneur (MEI);

b) individual contributor to the General Social Security Regime of the caput or item 1 of § 2 of art. 21 of Law No. 8,212, of July 24, 1991; or

c) informal worker, whether employed, self-employed or unemployed, of any nature, including intermittent inactive, registered in the Federal Government's Single Registry for Social Programs (CadÚnico) until March 20, 2020, or who, in terms of self-declaration, complies the requirement of item IV. (BRAZIL, 2020a).

The conditions of vulnerability caused by the Covid-19 virus allowed the inclusion of the informal worker and also of the individual microentrepreneur in the social sphere that could receive the benefit. However, the reformulated eligibility for the income transfer program establishes a new moment in Brazilian politics, since it implements, even temporarily, the Basic Citizenship Income program - Law nº 10.835 of 2004, that is, it is understood the need to measure a minimum amount of financial resources to a portion of the population that was already in a vulnerable condition even before the pandemic.

The window of opportunity for continuous implementation of the Basic Citizenship Income program opens again to the political market, which produces a great responsibility for the federal government to conduct the post-pandemic period, since even in the president's third year of office Jair Bolsonaro in 2021, the economic recovery forecasts are still insufficient to maintain the quality of life or the survival of a large number of Brazilians in conditions of social vulnerability.

For Pereira (2011), it can be said that the specific contents of social policies have taken on an institutional body of approximation to the historic Welfare State, insofar as it distances itself from the

previous liberal model and strengthens social protection systems, since the The State has a duty to pay attention also to its weakest members. Obviously, the Welfare State is a historical phenomenon, demarcated over time, while social policy has a more general connotation related to state actions to protect economically vulnerable citizens.

In view of this, it is necessary to characterize the social policy instituted by Emergency Aid from its protective nature, given the specific context of the pandemic and the sudden deceleration of economic activities. However, the welfare program remains a relatively divergent action with the electoral campaign speech or even with the government plan of Jair Bolsonaro (without a party). Thus, with the implementation of the Aid throughout the year 2020 and after the most intense wave of contamination of Covid-19, the Brazilian economy will still find it difficult to recover, the voter of Bolsonaro will be able to assess the three years mandate and verify that the campaign agenda was partially fulfilled by the president, before the election year in 2022.

In an initial perspective, the turn to the left given by the government, through the execution of a basic income program for almost a quarter of the term, could mean for the most ideological voters a radical change in the government's agenda. In this context, the possibility for the Bolsonaro government to implement a policy switch (policy change) becomes more evident, as the objectives of bringing Emergency Aid to the center of the president's public policy agenda may seem a failure of political representation to its ideological voters. For Andrade (2018), the execution of a policy switch does not only involve non-compliance with the politician's campaign platform or electoral promises, but refers to the change of political platform, thus, the liberal and conservative agenda becomes good policies -being social, which hurts the government's ideological identity. Evidently, the elected candidate has a certain independence in the face of voters' transitive wills, since it is very difficult to meet all the demands of citizens in a satisfactory manner.

Przeworski, Stokes & Manin (1999) describe that the elected representative should better interpret the interests of his citizens and even his own, for that, there is an elementary structure of political representation, when using periodic elections, the politician elected has autonomy to act according to their perceptions of what the priorities really are during a term. However, the candidate's proposals must be fulfilled over the four-year election, exactly to minimally meet the aspirations of voters who will be able to vote

again in the next electoral dispute. It is a question of responsiveness, that is, the ability of the politician to respond to the wishes of those represented, which means adopting public policies that were part of the preferences of the electorate.

At first, Bolsonaro voters can understand the contextual situation of the pandemic and accept the focus on social protection policies materialized by Emergency Aid, even because it is an international trend to carry out the minimum income transfer to workers, becoming a policy adopted by the federal government and adapted to local conditions of public resources and existing policies. However, it also allows the most critical voter to interpret that the implementation of the aid was the result of populist behavior by the president.

IV. The political survival of governments and distributive policies

For Downs (2013, p.133), "the desire to obtain and maintain power per se plays a greater role in the practical functioning of democratic politics than the desire to implement ideological doctrines or to serve specific social groups". Political behavior must be understood through mechanisms of power, in which the actors' interested goals may be more significant than their electoral discourse.

In this perspective, the political survival in the present and mainly, during the execution of strategies of the future campaign, produces substantial changes in the administrative trajectory of the political actor. For this reason, the need to maintain electoral support can generate relatively contradictory contexts of social policies, and thus, even politicians openly opposed to them are faced with situations in which they are obliged to implement them at any price, as required by the media, the international community and / or the population, and in more particular cases, for a political strategy to guarantee support and the vote of the beneficiaries of social policies. In the Brazilian case, in which the poorest population corresponds to a large part of the mass of voters, adopting social policies, at first, asymmetrical to the official campaign discourse becomes an imperative.

It is enough to observe the weight that public defense for maintaining the Bolsa Familia program has shown to have in the last elections for the federal executive (2014/2018), since it refers to a program of enormous social importance and unquestionable electoral impact. Although it was a hallmark of the governments of the Brazilian left (2003 to 2016), any

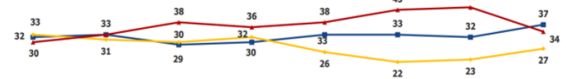
mention of the end of the program can produce intense electoral damage, regardless of the political ideologies of the candidates. This is an indispensable public policy for the population in social vulnerability, and equally relevant for the politicians who defend them during the elections.

In 2020, the health crisis caused by the Coronavirus demanded unprecedented emergency measures in Brazilian history, at a time when the collective experience of Emergency Aid puts the state's capacity to guarantee a minimum income to workers and the unemployed in conditions of poverty once again at the center of discussion. extreme poverty.

The financial amounts for the transfer of Emergency Aid resources by state of the federation, with government data available from April to October 2020 counted in billions of reais, were released according to the schedule organized by the Ministry of Citizenship and executed by *Caixa Econômica Federal*, with expected to end in December of 2020¹.

The abrupt progression of resources for social policies allowed the president, Jair Bolsonaro, to re-establish popular support relatively automatically. Thus, Emergency Aid financial transfer flows can easily be associated with changes in federal government approval rates.

Graph 1 - Levels of popularity of President Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2020)



	4/3/19	7/5/19	8/30/19	12/6/19	4/27/20	5/26/20	6/24/20	8/12/20
Good	32	33	29	30	33	33	32	37
Fair	33	31	30	32	26	22	23	27
Poor	30	33	38	36	38	43	44	34
Other	4	2	2	1	3	2	1	1

Source: Datafolha (2020)

The poor popular evaluation indexes on the Bolsonaro government, shown by the red line on the Datafolha graph, occupied around 30% of those interviewed in April 2019, reached a peak of 44% in June 2020, and declines immediately. In August 2020. The political instability caused by the government's position in relation to the real risks of the Coronavirus produced a considerable delay in establishing measures to restrict the spread of the virus, thus, state

¹ The installments of R\$ 600.00 occurred in the months of April, May, June, July and August. Then, Provisional Measure No. 1000 of September 2 instituted Residual Emergency Aid of R\$ 300.00 until December.

and municipal governments preferred to adopt the recommendations of the World Health Organization locally (WHO).

Consequently, the president's public disbelief about the impacts of Covid-19 in all parts of the planet revealed the inability of Jair Bolsonaro and his team to implement restrictive measures in a timely manner and that they could effectively coordinate the local actions of mayors and governors. The Regular assessment index plummeted in April when the number of deaths gradually increased, also associated with failures in the decision-making process and the formulation of public policy.

The participation of the federal legislature in the construction of the proposal demanded a lot of negotiation between Congress and the chief executive, both under intense monitoring by the media and the population. The initial government proposal was for installments of R\$ 200.00, however, the opposition demanded higher amounts, in the end, the amount of R\$ 600.00 was established.

The implementation of Emergency Aid took place on an urgent basis, due to the broader management methods already in place for other social policies of the Ministry of Citizenship, such as *Bolsa Família*. Through CadÚnico, the government was able to identify citizens registered in the federal database, currently with more than 74 million individuals (Cardoso, 2020). The context of materialization of the policy helps to understand the objectives intrinsic to the formation of the governmental agenda, since populist measures may be necessary in times of low social and media support.

For Kersche & Carneiro (2005), the institutional design of democracy limits the longevity of political leaders in power, adding to this condition the degree of political competence of voters and economic crises. Thus, in democratic societies, the generation of public goods for the majority of the population becomes essential for the political actor to remain in power, and not a matter of altruism of politicians. In short, it is more rational to be a good politician for the population, so the chances of remaining in power increase if private goods are distributed to everyone, to the detriment of some specific elites. Thus, macroeconomic policies that can generate some kind of income for society must be understood as an institutional imposition superior to the benevolent

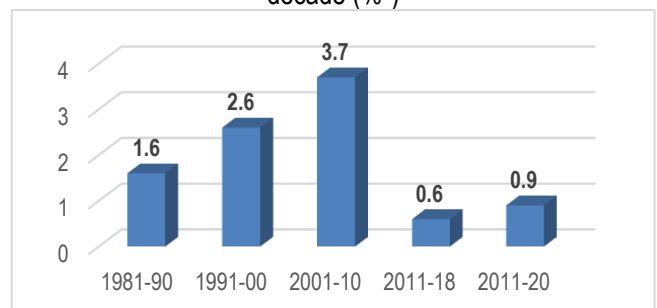
option of democratic leaders, regardless of their political views.

The survival of leaders is under threat when they are unable to provide sufficient resources to sustain political support. The specialized literature on revolutions highlights moments of crisis, usually economic, when the support of the population and interest groups loses strength due to the economic inaction of political leadership. In addition, problems with the distribution of public goods can cripple democratic governments as leaders lose their supporters. In democracies, the political actor wants to run for office again, and some of the instruments available to please the voter deal with the issue of the distribution of resources through public policies (Mesquita et al., 2003).

The implementation of Emergency Aid reveals the economic need caused by the Coronavirus, since commercial and industrial activities were affected by local restrictions of social isolation, reducing the income of formal and informal workers. In addition, it also demonstrates the political necessity of transmitting to the president the protagonism of the governmental agenda for the elaboration and payment of aid in the face of a recent history of economic cooling and progressive impoverishment of the population.

For Balassiano (2020), the Brazilian economic indexes have been disastrous since 2014, resulting from three considerable factors to consider the period, the strong recession, followed by a very slow recovery of the market and later, the crisis caused by the Coronavirus, in other words, even before the country started to recover from the seven-year recession, economic losses increased in 2020.

Graph 2 – Real average GDP growth rates per decade (%*)



* For the 2011-20 period, the median of the projections
Source: Balassiano (2020)

In this intensely negative scenario for the economic projections of the coming years, post-pandemic of 2020, the real condition of the government

in the face of social evaluation forced the implementation of distributive social policies as the main mark of the first half of Jair Bolsonaro's term (2019-2020). Thus, part of the ideological issues that motivated the candidate's campaign in 2018 became a secondary issue for the government's discourse, not only due to the emergence of the health crisis, but also due to the real need to obtain popular support to cross the next two years, technically, characterized by the economic recession.

For Nakaguma & Bender (2010), in an analysis of the characterizations of political cycles in the country, it was demonstrated that the Brazilian voter tends to reward the opportunistic behavior of politicians by raising public spending on building reputation to increase the likelihood of reelection of government officials. However, this strategy can be perceived by voters both as the president's administrative competence and as a clear demonstration of political opportunism. Some of these considerations are very significant for understanding the current process of implementing social policies of an emergency nature, mainly due to the particular situation of the government in 2020, since Jair Bolsonaro's mandate is still in the middle.

That said, the substantial increase in public spending on Emergency Aid may require the government to strategically maintain certain political actions so that it can take until a period closer to the campaign year for reelection. Given the pessimistic projections for the Brazilian economic recovery in the short term, coupled with the increase in unemployment, and the prolonged reduction in economic activities, the situation of the government may become more complicated towards the end of his term. Thus, the literature recognizes the progress of public expenditure in electoral years, however, the pandemic produced an extremely complicated scenario for the Bolsonaro government, with regard to its political survival until the end of the mandate, or even, the possibility of reelection in 2022.

V. Conclusion

In order to understand the broad process of formulating public policies, attention should be turned to the initial political mechanisms that establish the formation of the governmental agenda. In other words, it is crucial to recognize when a social problem becomes part of the government's discussion

proposals, since no political leader is able to reach all spheres of the citizen's social life to propose actions of public intervention and problem solving.

In democratic societies, the public arena is understood as a wide space of disputes of interests and formation of preferences, therefore, there are countless political, economic and social actors, in the face of particular situations that enable windows of opportunities for the construction of the governmental agenda. mainly with a focus on social policies. Thus, in the public policy market, the debate between interest groups, political parties, the media and organized society is a common practice in the process of converting social problems into political actions. These are mechanisms intrinsic to the public policy cycle, since pluralism and the spread of political power produce interactions in different spheres of public space.

In Brazil, as in all other countries in the world, the emergence of the Coronavirus pandemic brought economic activities to a standstill for a considerable period in 2020, in order to be able to actually practice the least possible social isolation among people, however, in the Brazilian case, the epidemiological crisis hit a region that had been in economic crisis and recession for several years, which increased the unemployment scenario, the impossibility of income and the marked impoverishment of the country's vulnerable population. For this reason, the implementation of Emergency Aid, regulated by Law No. 13,982 of April 2, 2020, brought to the government of Jair Bolsonaro (without a party) numerous institutional and political issues that caused sharp conflicts between the actors involved in its constitution.

As it is a social policy of a distributive nature, Emergency Aid emerged as a result of a conflict of forces in the international community that had already implemented similar measures in several countries around the world, from the media, from political actors in opposition to the government, and of organized society as a whole. Numerous actors in the public sphere demanded from the government specific and urgent measures to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus and also to reduce the economic effects resulting from the need for social isolation and, consequently, the paralysis of economic activities.

Thus, the financial instability of the population became more evident, in order to place a significant portion of Brazilians on the hunger map again. The impediment to obtaining income through the provision of work and the provision of services materialized a scenario of chaos and uncertainties about the country's

economy. However, the implementation of Emergency Aid also creates a certain amount of insecurity in the government of Jair Bolsonaro, as during the year 2020, the government was forced to implement distributive social policies with great budgetary and also programmatic impact.

The election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018 was based on neoliberal / conservative speeches, whose criticisms of policies considered strongly as on the left were fundamental to the rise of an electorate, at first, averse to social policies. However, the assumptions of political representation allow the elected politician the freedom to act in the name of the common good, even if it means going against party and ideological issues. Therefore, it is argued that the adoption of social policies to guarantee basic income to the vulnerable population in Brazil, such as Emergency Aid, can be configured as a policy switch (change of policies) in the case of continuity of actions of the same kind in Brazil. post-pandemic period, therefore, a marked transformation of the electoral-approved political platform in 2018.

In a context of economic crisis and prolonged recession, levels of popularity and vertical support for the president have been falling sharply since the beginning of 2020, which may mean the need to produce measures to rescue social support in order to give political survival to the government during the next two-year term. However, the increase in public spending on self-interested actions normally occurs during the election year, that is, at the end of the political cycle, in processes that aim at reelection. In the specific case of the Bolsonaro government, the building of reputation to compete for the new political dispute is severely hampered, initially, because the increase in public expenditure occurred even in the second year of office, in a situation of severe economic crisis and which may be questioned later by its more ideological voters, as they may be characterized as opportunists or of non-fulfillment of campaign promises by changing the elected platform, if the social agenda gains centrality in the government.

In the future, the elements of political representation and accountability of the president to his electorate can be questioned, based on failures in meeting voter preferences, or even in the adoption of populist actions to regain support. However, it is material that requires more specific investigations, and that at this moment, go beyond the objective limits of this work.

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