

# The impact of the Brazilian institutional arrangement on political control over bureaucracy

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## Abstract

This article aims to discuss which characteristics of the Brazilian political system hinder the political control over the bureaucracy and, consequently, hamper accountability in the country. Through a review of the literature on the topic and theoretical debate, we intend to investigate to what extent the institutions of Brazilian coalitional presidentialism facilitate or hinder bureaucratic control, which may impact the outcome of public policies. Initially, a review of the comparative literature on the subject was conducted, followed by the analysis of the Brazilian institutional arrangement and its impact on the appointment and monitoring strategies of Ministers in the Cabinet. In conclusion, despite the centrality of the executive in the Brazilian political system, it is noticed that there are informal constraints to the Presidency that can hamper the coordination of policies. In this sense, the federative structure and the multiparty system act as aggravating factors in this scenario and lead the executive to adopt various informal strategies of control over the bureaucracy. These strategies, while contributing to the management of the Office, may have negative impacts on policy outcomes, coupled with a lack of transparency in the control mechanisms used.

**Keywords:** Control of bureaucracy. Accountability. Coalitional presidentialism.

## *O impacto do arranjo institucional brasileiro no controle político sobre a burocracia*

### Resumo

Este artigo tem por objetivo discutir quais características do sistema político brasileiro dificultam o controle político da burocracia e, consequentemente, prejudicam a *accountability* no país. Por meio de revisão da literatura sobre o tema e debate teórico, investiga-se em que medida as instituições do presidencialismo de coalizão brasileiro facilitam ou dificultam o controle burocrático, o que pode impactar o resultado das políticas públicas. Inicialmente, parte-se de uma revisão da literatura comparada sobre o tema, seguindo para a análise do arranjo institucional brasileiro e seu impacto nas estratégias de nomeações e monitoramento de Ministros no Gabinete. Conclui-se que, apesar da centralidade do Poder Executivo no sistema político brasileiro, há constrangimentos informais à Presidência da República que podem dificultar a coordenação de políticas. Nesse sentido, a estrutura federativa e o sistema multipartidário atuam como agravantes nesse cenário e levam o Executivo a adotar variadas estratégias informais de controle sobre a burocracia. Essas estratégias, apesar de contribuírem para a gestão do Gabinete, podem ter impactos negativos nos resultados das políticas, somados à falta de transparência dos mecanismos de controle utilizados.

**Palavras-chave:** Controle da burocracia. *Accountability*. Presidencialismo de coalizão.

## *El impacto de la disposición institucional brasileña en el control político de la burocracia*

### Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo discutir qué características del sistema político brasileño dificultan el control político de la burocracia y, consecuentemente, perjudican la *accountability* en el país. Por medio de la revisión de la bibliografía sobre el tema y del debate teórico, se pretende investigar hasta qué punto las instituciones del presidencialismo de coalición brasileño facilitan o dificultan el control burocrático, lo que puede tener impacto sobre el resultado de las políticas públicas. Inicialmente, se parte de una revisión de la literatura comparada sobre el tema, seguida por el análisis de la estructura institucional brasileña y su impacto en las estrategias de nombramiento y control de los ministros en el Gabinete. Se concluye que, a pesar de la centralidad del Poder Ejecutivo en el sistema político brasileño, existen coacciones informales a la Presidencia de la República que pueden obstaculizar la coordinación de las políticas. En este sentido, la estructura federativa y el sistema multipartidario actúan como factores agravantes en este escenario y llevan al Ejecutivo a adoptar diversas estrategias informales de control sobre la burocracia. Estas estrategias, si bien contribuyen a la gestión del Gabinete, pueden tener efectos negativos en los resultados de las políticas, junto con la falta de transparencia en los mecanismos de control utilizados.

**Palabras clave:** Control de la burocracia. *Accountability*. Presidencialismo de coalición.

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## INTRODUCTION

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In studies on the dynamics of the coalitional presidentialism in Brazil and on the institutions of the country's political system, a common focus is on the relationships among political elites. The analysis of the legislative branch, the cabinet formation, and the dynamics of the government coalitions are clear agendas for scholars interested in political stability and governability as central elements of the operation of the state apparatus.

These perspectives are relevant in studies on the functioning of governments, but they only emphasize the top of the cabinet's organizational pyramid, observing the strategic decision makers and their capacities in coordinating interests and public policies guidelines. However, what is the capacity of the Brazilian political system to tactically deploy political strategies, and ensure their correct operation according to the elites' guidance? Are there mechanisms to guarantee that the head of the executive branch controls the bureaucrats' performance in the implementation of government projects?

In this sense, political control of the bureaucracy is a vital dimension both for the formation of the state and for the quality of democracy. As for the first, the agents of bureaucracy objectively affect the outcome of public policies and the control of the State. For democracy, bureaucrats can be seen as one more player in the delegation chain of the democratic representation, and they must be held accountable to the public. Other concerns related to controlling bureaucracy at an operational level of analysis lie both in limiting political-administration abuse and in ensuring managerial efficiency in a resource-scarce scenario (SPECK, 2000).

In the Brazilian political system, a series of institutional arrangements affect the capacity of control over the bureaucracy. Both the executive branch's constitutional authority and the structure and dynamics of political competition influence the control mechanisms and how this control is applied.

Based on control as an essential dimension for the development of the State and the quality of democracy, this article discusses the institutional aspects of the Brazilian presidentialism that influence the political control of the bureaucracy. The study specifically examines the characteristics of the Brazilian political system that favor or hinder the president's control over the cabinet. The article also seeks to understand why, despite the dominance of the executive branch in the Brazilian political system, there are persistent difficulties of control, and what are the possible strategies to overcome these difficulties. The article presents a literature review to establish a connection among the central debates on accountability and strategies of controlling bureaucracy in Brazil.

To address the questions posed above and the aim of this study, the first part presents a theoretical discussion on accountability, political control of the bureaucracy, and the usual control strategies adopted, using a comparative perspective. Then, considering the expectations of the literature regarding the political control of the bureaucracy in presidential systems, an institutional analysis of the Brazilian political system is presented, discussing the main obstacles to exercise control.

Valuable institutional attributes are discussed to understand the problems of coordination in the Brazilian case, such as the political-administration dominance of the president, the multiparty system, and the federation nature of political relations, since these attributes condition the number of actors involved in the distribution of power (LOUREIRO and ABRUCIO, 1999; OLIVIERI, 2011).

Finally, after reviewing and discussing the dynamics of the Brazilian political system, the article offers examples of strategies adopted by the president to exercise political control over the bureaucracy of the cabinet and overcome the obstacles imposed by the institutional arrangement in force in the country.

## COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE BUREAUCRACY

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In order to understand the importance of monitoring the government's cabinet, it is important to analyze debates that are precedent to the questions asked in the introduction of this study, as well as observing the structural aspects of the Brazilian political system as far as the control of the bureaucracy is concerned. In this sense, discussing the Brazilian case implies focusing on the debate about accountability and the expectations found in the comparative literature about presidential systems.

The advancement of democratic institutions over the years and across multiple nations has fueled debates about the capacity of governments to act responsibly to voters and to secure the public over the individual's interest. Thus, the perception of an

objective responsibility of the representatives towards the represented leads to the discussions on accountability, which are broad and range from the creation of formal institutions of control to the promotion of a civic culture of participation and transparency (CAMPOS, 1990, p. 33).

Abrucio and Loureiro (2004) identify three primary forms of accountability in contemporary democratic regimes: the electoral process, institutional control during the mandates, and the creation of intertemporal state rules. The first form concerns the regularity of electoral institutions, as well as the guarantee of political rights and access to information. The second is related to the external control mechanisms between the branches, and the internal control in administration and procedural activities. Finally, the third form of accountability concerns aspects of limiting the power of the public administration and guarantees of individual and collective rights before the state (ABRUCIO and LOUREIRO, 2004, p. 7)<sup>1</sup>.

The focus of this article is on the second form, the institutional control during the mandates, specifically on aspects of internal control, or the control of the executive branch over its functioning. In this sense, it is necessary to restrict which control relations are under analysis.

First, it is worth thinking of the political system as a great chain of delegation between agents and principals, in which the voters – considered the principals – delegate the decision making to the elected representatives – or the agents. The elected representatives delegate decisions to immediate lower hierarchical agents in the bureaucracy, and so on (HUBER, 2000).

In the Brazilian case, therefore, the delegation of the administration of the government occurs from citizens to the president, from the president to the cabinet, and then from the cabinet to the middle and street-level bureaucracy. In this chain of delegation, accountability ensures that civil servants working at the street level are acting by the directions provided by the president, a representative elected by the citizens for the legitimate defense of their interests. The purpose of this study is not to analyze the chain of delegation in the executive branch as a whole but focuses on the delegation from the president to the first level of bureaucracy, the cabinet.

Why is it relevant to study the control dimension? In a system of complex structures and of great magnitude such as Brazil, it is reasonable to think that there are some risks in the delivery of the public interest due to this vast chain of delegation. The possibility of bureaucracy acting discretely contrary to government directions or being captured by political groups is a high threat to the functioning of democratic institutions (OLIVIERI, 2011). There are still other risks, such as the omission of information, sabotage or obstacles created by bureaucratic activism. Moreover, for all these problems, the typical solution would be the political control of the bureaucracy.

The control over bureaucracy is not a consensus in the literature. It is common to understand the issue of control as a dilemma between accountability and administration efficiency, which leads to technocratic arguments advocating that the political and the bureaucratic spheres should be viewed as different environments. In this sense, it is suggested that the bureaucracy should act autonomously, insulated from the political actors and aiming at efficiency and neutral defense of the public interest (ABRUCIO and LOUREIRO, 2004, p. 3). The “neutral bureaucracy,” however, is a misconception that has been superseded by works pointing out that in modern democracies the public administration combines both “politicization of bureaucracy” and “bureaucratization of politics” (ABERBACH, MEZGER and ROCKMAN, 1991; ABERBACH, PUTNAM and Rockman, 1981).

Thus, the emphasis is on the analysis of the Brazilian political system’s capacity to process the delegation risks and to guarantee accountability. What are the characteristics of our system that favor or hinder the proper functioning of democratic institutions regarding delegation and accountability?

Firstly, it is important to observe the case of Brazil in the comparative political debates on the advantages and disadvantages of a presidential system in the promotion of accountability. On this topic, the literature often discusses the differences between parliamentary and presidential systems, where the latter usually have advantages over *ex post* control mechanisms (STRØM, 2000)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In an important work in the field of accountability, Guillermo O’Donnell (1998) presents the vertical and horizontal forms of accountability. The vertical occurs in ascending order between citizens and elected officials, essentially via electoral processes and public consultations. The horizontal, on the other hand, refers to the checks and balances between the branches. The classification of O’Donnell (1998) is not incompatible with that presented by Abrucio and Loureiro (2004), but the second was chosen because it presents nuances that better fit the analyzes proposed in this article.

<sup>2</sup> One of the main problems in the analysis of delegation chains observed in the literature is the risk of agency loss, that is, when the objectives of the principal are not fulfilled – totally or partially – by the agents. To minimize these risks there are a number of *ex ante* and *ex post* control mechanisms. *Ex ante* mechanisms are agents’ selection and sorting strategies, as well as improvements in contract design, clearly indicating the interests of the principal

Also, parliamentary systems would suffer from the problem of divided accountability, since they are systems in which there is a merger between the legislative and executive branches, generating interdependence and unification of powers (STRØM, 2000). Thus, the identification of who is the principal is not clear, which can generate misunderstanding of information and conflicts of authority.

In this sense, the separation of powers and separation of purposes inherent to presidentialism would be a positive point regarding accountability mechanisms (MAINWARING and SHUGART, 1997). This is because in a presidential system it would be easier to identify the principal and the distribution of responsibilities, due to the greater separation of powers. This clarity would allow a better understanding to whom and why one must be accountable. In the Brazilian case, there are nuances regarding this matter, which will be discussed later in this article.

In recent literature, primarily related to US presidentialism, much has been said about the increased president's control of the bureaucracy. This can in part be explained by changes in the political system regarding accountability. Presidents are held accountable by public opinion for the entire government and are evaluated separately from the legislative branch, different from what occurs in parliamentary systems. This is an incentive for presidents to have other forms of control and response to voters (LEWIS, 2011).

The increasing importance of the control over bureaucracy is observed by the strengthening of specific agencies for the organization of personnel, such as the Presidential Personnel Office (PPO) in the USA. In Latin America, there are similar agencies such as the Office of the Presidency in Mexico, the Office of the Chief of Staff in Brazil, the General Secretariat of the Presidency in Colombia and Ecuador (MARTÍNEZ-GALLARDO, 2010).

The control of bureaucracy is not the full authority of the president in presidential systems, and there are mechanisms of control by the legislative branch, which vary from country to country. In the US, for example, much of agency control is exercised by the Congress, which explains, to a certain extent, the bias in the literature prioritizing legislation actors in controlling bureaucracy. In the US there is a great responsiveness of the agencies to Congressional Committees, either through formal or informal mechanisms (FERRARO, 2006; WOOD and WATERMAN, 1991).

This is not the same dynamic of control observed in Brazilian presidentialism. Congressional Committees in Brazil are weak in the elaboration and control of public policies, and the legislative branch constitutionally does not have a typical competence of great interface with the government administration. The executive branch is responsible for the elaboration and control of public policies, specifically the president. There is a concentration of control mechanisms in this agent, which will be discussed in the following sections.

## **INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND DYNAMICS OF CONTROL**

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The previous section discusses the advantages of a presidential system in promoting accountability and the international trend that has been observed of increased control of the bureaucracy by the president. In the Brazilian political system, in particular, there are still more incentives to centralize the control.

Olivieri (2011) presents four mechanisms of political control of the bureaucracy in Brazil that are centered on the executive: budget, legislation, appointments, and monitoring. They are used here to discuss the institutional dominance of the president in controlling bureaucracy, and appointments and monitoring will be detailed in specific sections below.

Regarding budget management, despite the political and administrative autonomy of the other entities of the federation, transfers from the federal government are fundamental. In this relation, the executive is doubly strengthened by the institutions, since it has the constitutional authority of budget elaboration and execution, while there is little influence of the National Congress in this control. Because it is not mandatory to execute all the expenses authorized in the budget, there is a strengthening of the president's control of the bureaucracy, to the detriment of other agencies.

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and mutually agreed determinations for the performance of the required functions. *Ex post* mechanisms are improvements of information sharing through monitoring and constant checks through the insertion of veto actors responsible for reviewing agents' actions (STRØM, 2000).

Additionally, there is the mechanism of control by the legislation, which means the president's authority to set the agenda and issue decree-laws. Due to the exclusive authority to legislate on government matters, as well as the ability to issue provisional measures, the president is the leading player offering guidelines for the bureaucracy. Of course, the coalition structure does make it harder, requiring constant negotiations with the political support base in Congress, a dynamic that will be resumed in the following sections.

Monitoring policy implementation is shared with Congress (through Parliamentary Committees of Inquiry, the Federal Court of Audit (TCU), among others); however, the president's capacity for control increases when the implementation of federal policies is observed at the state and municipal level. This is because there are appointments at other federative levels responding to the federal executive, as well as mayors who are responsible for conducting policies sponsored by voluntary transfers to entities (OLIVIERI, 2011). Also, the control mechanisms available to Congress are not always entirely effective, such as the TCU, for example, which has problems in coordinating and fully performing some of its tasks (SPECK, 2000).

If presidential systems, in general, have advantages in guaranteeing accountability, and the Brazilian political system has characteristics that reinforce the political control of the bureaucracy by the presidency, why does Brazil still have problems of delegation and poor policy implementation?

The first institution to be analyzed to answer this question is the Brazilian presidential system. Unlike what occurs in the USA, Brazil presents a hybrid system of government, a kind of parliamentary presidentialism (COX and MORGENSTERN, 2001). In the Brazilian case, there is no rigid separation between the executive and the legislative branches, allowing the circulation between public agents and, consequently, a mix of attributions. For example, it is common for ministers to lead agendas in the legislative branch and for deputies to engage in the intermediation of demands of the local executive with the ministries, promoting what would be the reverse of their typical duties. This makes it difficult to identify who is the principal in the delegation chain, as well as increasing the number of actors in the decision-making process.

There is also the aggravating factor of multipartyism, a critical factor to the Brazilian coalitional presidentialism. Thies (2001) points out that delegation risks increase as the complexity of the system increases. A multiparty government, therefore, would face more difficulties than a majority of a single party, regardless whether it is a presidential or parliamentary system, either by differences of preferences, difficulty to pose sanctions or difficulty to overturn legislation decisions taken by unelected bureaucrats in the cabinet (THIES, 2001).

Although the initial criticisms regarding the capacity of the coalitional presidentialism to avoid a democratic breakdown have been overcome, it is clear that the costs of coalition management are increasingly high (ALVES and PAIVA, 2017).

The presence of multiple parties with political representation in the Brazilian National Congress can be understood as something beneficial to the democratic regime, under the argument that the pluralism of ideas is guaranteed, and the number of actors engaged in internal and external control is increased. However, recent studies suggest that the combination of presidentialism with proportional representation (PR) can generate other attitudes and incentives for politicians:

“Under PR, coalitions are common, and in many countries, parties do not sort themselves into two stable blocs. Instead, a party currently in opposition may expect to form a coalition with one or more of the incumbent parties sometime in the future. If this is so, opposition politicians may want to form a coalition with a party currently in power. If so, they have little incentive to expose the corruption of politicians whom they might need to collaborate with in the future. (...) This could produce a race in which opposition parties compete to reveal a scandal, but under plausible conditions, everyone may keep quiet if the cost of uncovering malfeasance is high and/or if the scandalmonger is punished by being excluded from future coalitions” (KUNICOVÁ and ROSE-ACKERMAN, 2005, p. 584).

In this sense, when anticipating the possibility of enjoying the benefits offered by the coalition, parties would tend to cooperate, increasing the costs of coalition management without observing improvements in internal and external control. As for the

presidency, confronting this dynamic is not a viable strategy, since the successful management of the coalition can guarantee the success of the executive branch in passing the legislation proposed during the mandate<sup>3</sup>.

As mentioned before, the president's authority over the bureaucracy does not reduce the burden of an exhaustive and continuous effort of coalition management and negotiation. Although intra-coalition conflicts do not imply the dissolution of government as occurs in parliamentary systems, the maintenance of political stability depends to a great extent on the cabinet's managerial capacity and power sharing (ALVES and PAIVA, 2017; PEREIRA, PRAÇA, BATISTA et al., 2015).

Another institutional feature that complicates this scenario is the federative structure. Brazil has a structure of three levels of government and stands out as a classic case of robust federalism, in which the state level is extremely relevant in national politics (LODOLA, 2009; SAMUELS, 2003). Therefore, the executive-legislative relationship is also conditioned by federalism, as the deputies are more responsive to the state (party leaders or governors) than to the national leadership. As a result, the problem of the federation structure is not only a matter of a clash regarding the competence of each level of government, or the difficulty to coordinate them. It is also the increase in the number of actors in the decision-making process since the division of power must also consider regional cleavages.

In this way, despite the initial positive expectations regarding the political control of the bureaucracy due to the adoption of a presidential regime, and the centrality of the executive in the Brazilian political system, it is possible to see that there are some obstacles imposed by the dynamics of management of the government coalition.

In the Brazilian system, the president must deal with very heterogeneous multi-party actors, and they need to consider the internal cleavages within parties and the regional differences reinforced by the federation structure. Because of the permeability of the executive in other entities of the federation, whether for budgetary matters, policy implementation or even for electoral support, the president needs to dialogue with political leaders in multiple arenas.

Given this scenario, how can the president exercise control over such a heterogeneous cabinet in a political system with such complex dynamics? The following sections present a discussion on some of the main strategies adopted by presidents to overcome the adversities imposed by the configuration of the Brazilian institutional arrangement.

## CONTROL OF THE APPOINTMENTS

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As mentioned before, in addition to the authority on budget and the legislative initiative – tools used by the president to negotiate in defense of the government's interests – there is also the dominance of the president in structuring the cabinet. The president has authority to appoint positions in the administration, and this is used as a strategy to exercise control informally and personally since most of the positions of free appointment do not need to be ratified by the Senate and is not subject to formal opposition by the legislative branch.

These choices, however, are not free of constraints (PEREIRA, PRAÇA, BATISTA et al., 2015). As in the Brazilian political system, the cabinet is composed of coalitions, the management of bureaucracy is shared with other actors, considering aspects that are not only partisan or technical, "but also federative and personal" (OLIVIERI, 2011, p. 1147).

Based on the North American case, Lewis (2011) presents a series of possible explanations for increasing the executive control over appointments. Among them is the increase in the number of government programs, which of course would require greater control. Also, increasing appointments could make it easier for agencies to act according to the preferences of the president and the majority of Congress in majoritarian governments since a higher number of nominees would be a further guarantee that the institution would be in line with the proposed guidelines. Ideological factors or even patronage opportunities that benefit members of the Congress and parties would be explanations for the observed increase in appointments.

To some extent, Lewis' (2011) analysis may fit the Brazilian case. Olivieri (2011) points out, for example, that administration reforms and technological innovations have not reduced the size of the bureaucracy, but instead, have increased the powers

<sup>3</sup> A study on the degree of coalescence of the Brazilian cabinet by Amorim Neto (2000) observes that when the distribution of positions in the cabinet among the party's representation in Congress is more proportional, the president is more likely to be successful in passing legislation.

of the state and the need to maintain sizeable professional staff working for the government. This expansion of bureaucracy, together with greater economic stability in the country, has an impact on patronage strategies as it expands the resources available for political bargaining to consolidate a support base. These resources were not available for cabinet formation at the time of the crisis of the developmentalist state (LOUREIRO and ABRUCIO, 1999), which indicates a recent change of strategy in cabinet formation.

In this sense, the increase in appointments in the case of Brazil may not be necessarily connected to a management project that would seek to ensure greater alignment with the president's directions or greater integration in the implementation of policies. When these appointments are a result of patronage and are carried out under the influence of multiple heterogeneous actors, what could work as a control mechanism, ends up being another obstacle in the management of public policies.

In the same study, Lewis (2011) shows the positive and negative impacts that appointments can have on the agencies' performance. As for the positives, there are benefits in appointments, such as the freedom to indicate professionals who have specific managerial skills to conduct certain activities. These professionals would have, in a certain way, a differentiated attitude towards the career civil servants. They are more likely to take risks and, consequently, increase the capacity of innovation in the area in which they were allocated. In this scenario, there would be gains regarding the quality of the policies implemented.

On the other hand, as negative impacts, there would be a decrease in transparency and the consequent difficulty of control over the appointed positions. The excessive politicization of bureaucracy can generate low-performing teams, because of the low expertise and technical qualifications required to fill these positions. Another relevant issue, related to the quality of the deliveries of the agencies, is the rotation of positions, which undermines the knowledge management in the ministries and can generate resistance of the career civil servants to act according to the guidelines established.

The issue of low performance, however, is not consensus. In a case study of the Brazilian Ministry of Finance, Loureiro and Abrucio (1999) observed that many of these high-ranking positions are occupied by the same group of professionals with high knowledge about the administration and experience with the bureaucracy (the so-called "*esplanadeiros*"), who would be of vital importance to the stability of government. In this way, the evaluation of the performance of these actors could be broken down into more than one dimension, not only the dimension of results obtained by each agency, but also the management of inter-ministerial connections, and the monitoring of the president over the ministers to maintain stability coalition, which is discussed in the next section.

It should be emphasized that an appointee will not always have an impact on the results of the policies. This impact is conditioned to other aspects such as the number of appointees, the opening of agencies or governmental bodies for external influence, the asymmetry of information between the appointee and career civil servant, as well as the degree in which the president controls the appointments (LEWIS, 2011).

In Brazil, Santos (2009) says that the political appointment of positions would not necessarily reflect clientelistic practices that would reduce the efficiency of the administration. The author says that the absence of criteria for appointments and of formal controls on these positions results in a level of discretion much superior to other democracies (SANTOS, 2009).

In this sense, the formalization of criteria and the establishment of mechanisms for transparent evaluation and control is a fundamental aspect for an efficient management of public policies, especially considering the scenario of bureaucratization of politics and politicization of bureaucracy, in which both political and bureaucratic actors increasingly act like policymakers (LOUREIRO and ABRUCIO, 1999).

Much can be speculated about the correlation between the government's performance and the number of appointed positions, but the structuring of formal control mechanisms that guarantee transparency and efficiency, working as bases for accountability and the decision-making of political leaders, remain a field to be explored.

Moreover, the appointment process does not guarantee performance, and it is not conducted exclusively by the president. The higher the position and the more central to the federal administration is the minister in the analysis, the higher the filters through party leaderships (LOPEZ and PRAÇA, 2015). Moreover, considering the complexity of the coalition, the higher will be the efforts to exercise control in alignment with the will of the president. With this in mind, some of the key strategies related to appointments to form the cabinet are listed below.

## OFFICE MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING STRATEGIES

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The particular combination of attributes of the Brazilian political system may result in significant difficulties for the distribution of power since the control will have to be distributed among different actors in a multilevel scenario. Therefore, it affects the management of the government's coalition and, consequently, the stability of the presidential cabinet.

Even though Huber (2000) indicates that the cabinet's instability does not make a difference in the final results of policies in parliamentary systems, Martínez-Gallardo (2010) points out, in a study on presidentialism in Latin America, that the cabinet's stability can affect the performance of the executive in the implementation of policies, either regarding the ability of inter-ministerial coordination or the possibility of long-term transactions.

Disregarding the preliminary aspects of stability studies related to policy outcomes, it is possible to say that there is indeed an impact on the efforts of coordination, accountability and expertise building (MARTÍNEZ-GALLARDO, 2010). According to the author, the stability in the cabinet is essential so that the ministers consolidate their credibility and authority before the bureaucracy, establishing relations of control and accountability. The expertise building is central, as continuity in the mandate allows the minister to build this background, reinforcing the earlier aspects of credibility and authority, further expanding their capacity for control over the bureaucratic apparatus.

For Martínez-Gallardo (2010), other aspects besides the number of actors involved affect the stability of the cabinet, such as the ideological distance between parties, whether the government is a majority or not, and whether the cabinet itself is formed of ministers that belong to a political party. Offices with ministers belonging to parties tend to be more stable. Also, an excessive number of ministerial portfolios could negatively impact stability due to the difficulty of cooperation and the overlapping of competencies.

Based on the theory of agent-principal delegation, there is a chain of distribution of competencies from the president to ministers, from ministers to another member of the executive branch in other levels, and so on. Martínez-Gallardo (2010) observes that, in Latin America, ministers generally perform various roles not exclusively related to the control of the bureaucracy. It is common to see them in processes of negotiation with the National Congress and the construction of legislation, as well as the design and implementation of public policies, as discussed previously.

Not all Ministers, however, will play a central role in government and, likewise, not all control mechanisms will be available to all of them. Huber (2000) emphasizes some control strategies that can be undertaken by ministers, such as: *ex ante* control (ministerial guidelines and ordinances), *ex post* control (routine monitoring and judicial control), budget constraints (working as *ex ante* and *ex post*) and also the possibility of the bureaucracy politicization or high influence of political parties.

Huber (2000) defines politicization as permitting civil servants to join political parties, which can lead to problems of coordination depending on the ideological positioning of the government. However, the politicization of bureaucracy can be understood not only as party belonging but as the political appointment of outsiders to occupy the positions. These outsiders would then be responsive to the leaders that have appointed them, forming one of the most important channels of political control over bureaucracy (LEWIS, 2011; MOE and CALDWELL, 1994; OLIVIERI, 2011; PRAÇA, FREITAS and HOEPERS, 2011).

However, not all ministers have the power to make all appointments in their offices, and presidential strategies vary, giving more or less autonomy to their ministers, depending either on party, technical matters, or the importance that the government gives to the different ministries (LOUREIRO and ABRUCIO, 1999; MARTÍNEZ-GALLARDO, 2010).

Also, not all ministers appointed are chosen by the president, which increases the incentives for the president to implement monitoring strategies, such as appointing personnel subordinated to the ministers. As discussed before, the president's appointment authority is not limited to forming the cabinet. Their authority has expanded so they may appoint personnel to other positions that assist in monitoring the bureaucratic apparatus. This strategy also promotes the influence of political parties and the politicization of bureaucracy in favor of the president. The literature shows that one of the leading positions in this sense is the Ministry's Executive Secretary (PEREIRA, PRAÇA, BATISTA et al., 2015; THIES, 2001).

The high-level of influence of the political parties is an important control strategy observed not only in Brazil, where the secretaries work as supervisors or watchdogs of the president. In a study on the appointments of secretaries in Brazil, Pereira,

Praça, Batista and Lopez (2015) established a typology of the profiles in the cases analyzed, composed of three main categories: fiscal, political sharing and technical.

The fiscal profile can be both political-party related and bureaucratic. The first refers to situations where the minister does not belong to the president's party, and the secretary does. The second is when neither the minister nor the executive secretary is from the president's party, and the secretary does not belong to any party. In this second case, the secretary would be a bureaucrat who enjoys the president's trust and not necessarily someone affiliated with a party. In any case, an executive with a fiscal profile can be crucial in controlling bureaucracy at the first level of delegation in the delegation chain, ensuring alignment with the presidential proposals and monitoring the action of ministers who may be more ideologically distant from the chief of the executive branch.

The appointment of a fiscal executive secretary is also influenced by the level of coalescence of the offices. The more monopolistic or disproportionate the distribution of ministries among the governing parties, the smaller the efforts to control ministries of other parties. This happens because, when disproportionately distributed in favor of the president's party, the remaining offices in the cabinet are either less relevant (since the most significant has already been occupied by the party) – in that case there would be no need for political control – or the president does not want to tire with partners already under-rewarded in the coalition (PEREIRA, PRAÇA, BATISTA et al., 2015).

Political sharing occurs when the minister and Ministry Executive Secretary are from the same party or both from the president's party. When the executive and the minister are from the same party, the risk of bureaucracy acting differently from ministerial guidelines is much lower (PEREIRA, PRAÇA, BATISTA, et al., 2015). Here we observe a possible advantage of the party influence for the control of the bureaucracy regarding the quality of policies produced.

Finally, the technical profile can be characterized by a bureaucratic assistant or bureaucratic sharing. In the first, the minister belongs to the president's party and the secretary has no party and deals mostly with the office's budgetary aspects and bureaucratic matters. In the latter, both minister and secretary do not belong to any party.

It is possible to identify that top positions in the cabinet are not usually occupied by career civil servants, but rather by appointees. This practice could create bureaucratic fragility due to the instability of guidelines and constant turnover, but this scenario of vulnerability is not confirmed by the findings of Loureiro and Abrucio (1999) when studying the Ministry of Finance. The authors showed that, at least in priority areas, there is a specific insulation of the bureaucracy regarding changes in the political context.

At first sight, regarding the appointment of Ministries' Executive Secretaries, there are advantages of control in the first levels of delegation, and the strategy allows the centralization of issues that the president considers more important, promoting greater alignment of policies. However, excessive control through the appointment of executive secretaries who would act as supervisors may be a problem, as this situation limits the autonomy of ministers and may affect the quality of the public policies produced, as well as create tensions in the management of the coalition.

## CONCLUSION

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The political control of the bureaucracy has been a recurring agenda in contemporary democracies. Control as an instrument for promoting accountability has been a significant concern to scholars researching democratic institutions. Considering its importance to the development of democracy, studying the obstacles posed to controlling bureaucracy and how to circumvent these difficulties are extremely relevant in political science and public administration studies.

In the analysis of the Brazilian political system it is possible to observe that, despite the existence of institutional characteristics that theoretically favored the political control of the bureaucracy – such as the presidential regime, the centrality of the executive and low external control exercised by the legislative – the country still faces significant challenges regarding the promotion of accountability.

This is because Brazil brings together a series of characteristics that make it difficult to coordinate and monitor state activities. Among them, stand out the hybrid nature of Brazilian presidentialism and the dynamics of coalition management required by robust federalism and a multiparty system. This complex scenario increases the number of actors in the decision-making process and sharing control responsibilities, making it difficult to identify a principal in the authority delegation chain, and burdening the monitoring processes.

To ensure the functioning of this arrangement, presidential strategies vary, seeking to balance the dilemma of governability that comes from the distribution of power and from the bureaucratic insulation that is needed in the most central areas of government. This insulation of priority areas is what allows the president's party to put forward its main proposals. These strategies range from competencies delegated to their ministers, to the direct appointment of personnel to monitoring positions – especially Ministries' Executive Secretaries – promoting the politicization of bureaucracy.

The impact of these control strategies on the performance of the public administration is not consensual, but the great discretion and the reduced formal controls on these mechanisms make it hard to assess the control of the Brazilian bureaucracy and its respective outputs.

Therefore, it seems a promising research agenda to investigate the relationship between the executive's control strategies and the results of policies coming from each agency under analysis. In this sense, it is necessary to consider not only the number of appointments but the origin of the nominees and their possible links with national or regional political leadership. Also, investigating the nature of the agencies and which policies are most subject to political capture would be of great value to scholars and policymakers.

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