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IMPACTS OF THE BRAZILIAN CONSTITUTION OF
1988 IN THE DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY OF THE
NORTHEAST

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ABSTRACT: This article seeks to verify the reflexes of the constitutionalization of the fight against regional inequalities for the development of the Northeast. In order to do so, the legislative and institutional structure prior to the Constitution of 1988, the most relevant state actions and the obstacles that hampered the planned results are made explicit. Then, an analysis of the results of the public policies adopted, mainly, in the two decades following the promulgation of the Citizen Charter, concerning the improvement of the socioeconomic conditions of the Northeastern population. We adopted a historical approach based on the literature on development regulation and on public policy studies aimed at economic growth and poverty reduction. It is concluded that the Constitution of 1988 provided for the execution of state actions that promoted the development of the Northeast, but that a Herculean effort is still required to reduce the gap that separates the Northeast from the Southeast.

Keywords: Constitution of 1988. Development. Northeast.

RESUMO: Neste artigo busca-se verificar os reflexos da constitucionalização do combate às desigualdades regionais para o desenvolvimento do Nordeste. Para tanto, explicita-se a estrutura legislativa e institucional anterior à Constituição de 88, as ações estatais mais relevantes e os obstáculos que frearam os resultados planejados. Em seguida, realiza-se uma análise dos resultados das políticas públicas adotadas, principalmente, nas duas décadas seguintes à promulgação da Carta Cidadã, concernentes à melhoria das condições socioeconômicas da população nordestina. Adotou-se uma abordagem histórica apoiada na literatura que trata da regulamentação do desenvolvimento e em estudos sobre as políticas públicas direcionadas ao crescimento econômico e à redução da pobreza. Conclui-se que a Constituição de 88 proporcionou a execução de ações estatais que promoveram o desenvolvimento do Nordeste, mas que ainda se demanda um esforço hercúleo para reduzir o hiato que separa o Nordeste da região Sudeste.

Palavras-chave: Constituição de 1988. Desenvolvimento. Nordeste.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The idea of the Brazilian Northeast as an inhospitable place, incapable of generating wealth, was a construction that appeared in the book *O Sertanejo*, by Jose de Alencar (2013), originally published in the year 1875, his literary landmark; in the scientific field, Carl Friedrich Philip Von Martius, physician, botanist and anthropologist, who arrived in Brazil in the entourage of the Austrian Duchess Leopoldina, and undertook a journey through the interior of Brazil, from 1817 to 1820, was the forerunner of the studies that generalized the region as being unfit for wealth production (ARRUDA, 2005).

However, Euclides da Cunha (1979), with the book *Os Sertões*, published in 1902, was the author who projected himself as the constructor of the idea of the miserable Northeast, as much in the popular imaginary as in the scientific assertions, when delimiting this geographic space of Brazil like a place punished by the inclement sun, periods of prolonged drought, famine, misery. An idea that took shape and spread from the regionalist novels, we can mention Raquel de Queiroz's *O quinze* (1993) and *Vidas Secas* by Graciliano Ramos (1998). Scientific works were also formulated from this bias and reproduced similar assertions, such as that of the geographer Manuel Correia de Andrade (1986) and the French sociologist and anthropologist Roger Bastide (1959).

Other views opposed this generalization of the miserable Northeast and distinguished spaces of production of wealth, even in the area concerning the semi-arid, a fact that already existed even before the industrialization and the emergence of the metropolises. Historian Nobre (1989) points out the production of cotton, which at times generated more resources than the export of sugar; in addition to what points to the existence of large sums collected in the northeastern backlands, based on the international interest that lasted from the period of the emergence of the great industries until World War II, related to the production of vegetable oils extracted from castor bean, babaçu almond and cotton lump. Arruda (2003), in turn, emphasizes the capital produced and accumulated by cattle farmers in the sertão, who combined the activity of extensive breeding for the export of meat and leather with the commercial activity in rural towns and cities.

The miserable Northeast is a built-up representation that has worked to conceal the domination of rural workers by naturalizing the misery of the land and, consequently, the misery of man, thus rendering invisible the formation of capital and its concentrated accumulation produced in all geographic sub-areas of the Northeast, comprising the zone of the forest, of the agreste, sertão and middle north. A wealth built in spite of the low productivity of economic activities, especially when compared with the southeast region, as exemplified by the economist Celso Furtado (2007). It should also be pointed out, as demonstrated by the sociologist Francisco de Oliveira (1981), that in this low productivity economy the accumulation of wealth was appropriated by a minority, which resulted in harmful effects for the whole population of the Northeast.

In fact, the scientific efforts undertaken in the search to demonstrate the combination, in this national geographic space, of production of wealth and misery, transformed the Northeast region into a priority Brazilian social issue. This has boosted the national political debate on the ideal formulas for its confrontation. A discussion that is at the base of the proposal of the institutional rearrangement of the federal and state organs with activity in the region, carried out in the middle of the XX century, and the Constitutional positivation, in 1988, directed to the reduction of the regional inequality.

In this article, we seek to verify the effects of the constitutionalization of the fight against social and regional inequality, concurrently with the regulations that redirected the dynamics and actions of the institutions focused on the development of the Northeast region, such as the Northeast Development Superintendency (SUDENE), Banco do Nordeste do Brasil (BNB), and the Northeast National Investment Fund (FINOR). It also seeks to ascertain whether the implementation of the constitutionally foreseen provisions and the ordinary regulations aimed at regional development were able to positively alter the socioeconomic reality of the Northeast. Finally, this article seeks to contribute to the production of a political-legal agenda that will keep the flame of the enthusiasm that has stirred the debates of the National Constituent Assembly of 1987/88 on the themes of poverty, inequality and regional development.

2 STATE ACTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHEAST BEFORE THE CONSTITUTION OF 1988

The intervention of the State in the Northeast is understood in its logic and historicity when viewed vis-à-vis its economic formation, which broadly took place on the basis of the sugar economy practiced in the eastern part, and the subsistence economy, which developed in the countryside of the region and produced predominantly food and animals for transportation, aimed at supplying sugar cane farms and sugar mills. The combination of these segments formulated an economy dependent on the international market and based on the ownership of the latifundia, and just as the coffee baron emerged in the southeastern region, the emergence of the sugar “baron” and the “colonel” of cattle farm and cotton. The unitary power of the Second Empire and the Old Republic was reproduced in the northeastern region, as a legitimizer of a policy that guaranteed the profits obtained from the export, so that the state actions, under the control of “barons” and “colonels”, aimed at the maintenance of the land structure and the way in which the labor force was exploited, which formed the basis of maintaining earnings. (Oliveira, 1981)

The Inspection of Works Against Drought (IOCS), created in 1909, later called the Federal Inspection of Drought Works (IFOCS), and finally, in 1945, the National Department of Drought Works (DNOCS). was established by decree n. 8,846, with the following functional objectives: (I) construction of railways and lanes; (II) the installation of dams and irrigation systems; (III) the planting of drought-resistant vegetation; and (IV) systematization of studies of the meteorological, geological and topographic conditions of the areas affected by the drought phenomenon. (BRAZIL, 2016). The state actions inaugurated here are recognized as being the first rational interventions, the result of studies and research, carried out in the Northeast. It should be pointed out that these organs, according to Oliveira (1977), were originally intended to operate throughout the national territory, but the oligarchic power, mainly linked to the cattle-cotton farms, appropriated their operations and limited them, respectively, the semi-arid region.

The coexistence of local powers with a strong central power is not contradictory, according to Bursztyn (1984), the local order of the “colonels” of the sertão functioned as a support, associated with the authoritarianism practiced in the other regions of the country, for the central power, which in turn guaranteed the continuity of the pyramidal socioeconomic structure, in which a few had a wealth that separated them from the bulk of the population situated at its base. In this sense, the rationalizations that, by logic, should promote changes in the productive structure and, consequently, in the form of appropriation of productivity, have in fact kept the bases of the mode of production and the accumulation of capital extremely unequal in the Northeastern region. Thus, in the last 40 years of operation of the federal government, almost exclusively through the DNOCS, the social reality of the Northeast did not change, nor did the damaging effects of the droughts on the owners of minifundios and agricultural workers landless.

The Getulista period, which marked an inflection in the organization of production in the country, began a change in the quality of state action in the Northeast. However, it should be noted that the modernization brought by Getúlio Vargas did not promote a change in the structure of production or, especially, in the structure of the local patriarchal power that maintained its unshakable essence. The creation of the Sugar and Alcohol Institute (IAA) is a demonstration of how the Northeastern oligarchy appropriated state actions to guarantee the traditional forms of exploitation in the capital-labor relationship and the latifundio-minifundio. As Bursztyn (1984) argues, like the DNOCS, the functioning of the IAA did not promote change in the establishment of the region.

It can be affirmed that the Hydroelectric Company of São Francisco (CHESF), created in 1945, through Decree 8.031, in the middle of Vargas’ actions of construction of the industrial base of the country, is the first relevant initiative aimed at strengthening of the productive infrastructure of the Northeast region. The regulation of this body expresses this institutional objective in Article 1, where it is stated that the Ministry of Agriculture is authorized to constitute CHESF, in the form of a joint-stock company, which in its operation is obliged “to carry out the progressive industrial exploitation of the hydroelectric power of

the São Francisco River.” Despite the first mission to produce, transmit and commercialize electricity for eight states in the Northeast: Bahia, Sergipe, Alagoas, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará and Piauí, the fact of this link the administration of the Ministry of Agriculture has made it, in practice, an operational support body for state actions for the development of the agricultural and livestock sector.

Banco do Nordeste do Brasil (BNB) and the Northeast Development Superintendency (SUDENE) are the state organizations that, in the mid-twentieth century, have produced a change in the landscape of the Northeast, by shifting the centrality of their economy from the zone rural areas to urban areas, which were gradually becoming industrialized and service centers. This is because their institutional missions, although they contribute to the modernization of the primary economic sectors, are markedly focused on the creation and support of industrial enterprises, besides the activities of commerce and services auxiliary to the production of manufactured goods.

Following the order of creation and beginning of action of these two institutions, it should be noted that the BNB was created by Law 1649, on July 19, 1952, under the Getúlio Vargas government. Briefly, in its article 8 of the aforementioned law, there is the primary activity of this organ: “Banco do Nordeste do Brasil will provide assistance, on loan, to enterprises of a reproductive character, in the area of the Drought Polygon”. It can be seen that the institutional priority is the encouragement of industrialization and, consequently, the generation of employment and income in areas where economic activities of low productivity predominate, mainly through the granting of financial assistance to the characteristic transformation enterprises. Still as far as the performance of this state bank is concerned, it has as an activity the end of its operation, roughly, the proposition of actions geared towards the economic and social development.

SUDENE, in turn, created under the auspices of Law 3,692, on December 15, 1959, according to Souza’s (2012, page 593) explanation, has “the purpose of promoting inclusive and sustainable development in its area of action and the competitive integration of the regional productive base into national and international economy “. Therefore, its main attribution was the fight against social exclusion in the perimeter of the Northeast region, as well as the reduction of internal inequalities, by means of a comparison of survival conditions and quality of life among subareas, cities and municipalities. In evaluating SUDENE’s performance, Pereira (1988, p.85) explains that: “SUDENE’s role was to interrupt the process of aggravating regional differences, not eliminating it.”

The National Bank for Economic Development (BNDE) was created in 1971, under Law 5,662, in the framework of institutional reform, at the federal level, carried out by the Military Government, characteristically the hub of planning and control of state actions carried out throughout the territory national. Thus, in organizational engineering, this government delimited this body as a public company linked to the Ministry of Planning and General Coordination. The inversion of the signal that depleted the ability of regions, states, and municipalities to plan endogenously their developments appears in the normative scope of the BNDE. This is observed in article 5, of Law 5662, which shows the tendency for the Federal Government to concentrate on planning the economy of the country, so that BNDE’s institutional mission was to control bank operations aimed at promoting “the national economy, in the sectors and with the limitations recorded in its investment budget “.

With the appearance of the BNDE, Banco do Nordeste’s actions began to be executed in partnerships with the federal sphere of government, that is, the BNDE assumed the role of operational arm of national development, and therefore also presented itself as a promoter of the development of the Northeast. As indicated by Souza (2012, p.606), as a federal financing agency with nation-wide coverage, “the BNDE manages several government promotion programs in the agricultural, industrial and social areas, among others. agency has several sources of federal resources.”

The Northeastern Investment Fund (FINOR), created by Decree-Law 1,376, was established to strengthen the actions of Banco do Nordeste (BNB) and the Superintendency of Development of the Northeast (SUDENE). In few words, it can be said that its objective is to strengthen development in the BNB and SUDENE areas, since it is an attractive investment for taxpayers. In addition, FINOR was designed

and instituted to reinforce Northeast development actions based on fiscal policies, since, according to Souza (2012, p.615), “FINOR was the result of the fiscal benefit granted by the federal government to taxpayer companies in the real profit modality, in the form of a refund of part of the tax in fund quotas.”

This institutional structure, shaped between the government of Juscelino Kubitschek and the Military Government, enabled the elaboration and execution of public policies directed towards the development of the Northeast. However, the organizational structure outlined for state action in this region, directly or indirectly, results from the impact, in the technical-scientific and political environment, of the studies of the Working Group for the Development of the Northeast (GTDN), a body of scholars and researchers who later lent organicity and functionality to SUDENE.

It is a consensus among the scholars of political economy and public policy in the Northeast that the report produced by the GTDN in the 1950s is about the setting of the technical-scientific analysis of the Northeast. Moreover, after more than half a century of its publication, the report continues being accepted as the main diagnosis of the region, as an example, it is mentioned here the researchers Cláudia Passador and João Passador (2010), who reflect on some of the region’s public policies starting from this work.

The coordinator of the studies of the GTDN and then first president of SUDENE, under the appointment of President Juscelino Kubitschek, economist Celso Furtado, credited this initiative of the State as being the result of a convergence of political factors that propitiated the Northeast to be thought rationally, which put in motion the possibility of structural changes in economic and political organization, thus confronting local, “coronelistic” power, which was based on archaic forms of exploitation of land and labor. An experiment that was interrupted by the military coup of 1964, which hampered the civilization march, by promoting a political setback that made the state institutions prisoners of the old oligarchical political leaderships. A strategy of the military that, in exchange for the support of the imposed political order, opened spaces in the public administration for indications of the landlords. In fact, the state actions legitimized the concentration of income and social distance, which GTDN had diagnosed as resulting mainly from the concentrated land structure and the low incidence of wage labor.

Furtado (1989) described the economy of the Northeast that SUDENE tried to transform as a system of low productivity and dependent on foreign trade. Historically, two poles of production were established in the Northeast; being a - center economy - of farm in the coastal strip oriented towards the export; and another - peripheral economy - dedicated to the production of feed animals and for food, with the purpose of supplying the first pole, being complemented with the production of food subsistence. In the first pole, slave labor was part of the venture capital, which, in the process of reducing demands on the external market, led companies to opt for free labor reduction, in order to reduce expenses and maintain the rates of profit. This liberated labor force thickened the labor force occupied in the peripheral economy, thus further reducing the productivity of this pole and simultaneously increasing its demographic importance.

Nevertheless, as the expansion of job opportunities was higher in the subsistence economy, it served as a locus of absorption of surplus labor from the export sector, which from the nineteenth century came to be faced with a permanent reduction of its consumer market. In this way, a regional economy was created with flows between the two poles, where the crisis of export that was increasingly abused on the companies of the coastal strip reduced the rates of profit and the income of the wage labor; However, in the subsistence economy, there was a growing deterioration of the conditions of survival, which caused an average impoverishment of the region.

Taking also into consideration, in the economic configuration of the Northeast, the uniqueness that the more the need was to expand the exploration of the farthest lands of the coast, that is, the more it advanced towards the sertão - corruption of “desertão” where agriculture was practiced in low rainfall areas, which was to expand the low productivity economy in the region. However, it has flourished in the subsistence economy, as stressed by Furtado (1989), the production of export-oriented goods, mainly cotton and oilseeds, a factor that contributed to a deepening of the social distance existing in this area where productivity is lower. This is because the cotton-livestock binomial was settled in the latifúndia,

so that the largest and best land was occupied for the exploitation of the goods generating higher profits, while the surplus labor was located in land strips of low productivity specializing in food production. And, because of the concentration of land, many exercised this activity in the land of others, being paid in the form of partnership, perceiving a third or half of the production.

The demographic growth combined with the land structure, marked by the possession of latifundia in the hands of few owners, was reinforcing the ills provoked in the great droughts, that from century XIX gained national visibility. The drought problem, which dragged expressive population numbers into the condition of misery and hunger, has become a “social issue” to be faced by public power. The actions invariably occurred through the so-called “work fronts”, where workers’ loads were allocated for the construction of dams and dams, usually carried out on large estates; or in the provision of other services, usually linked to the interests of large landowners, such as side roads or works that facilitate the storage and disposal of production.

In this perspective, the state action did not alter the characteristics of the economic system of the region, since it favored the accumulation of power of the owners of the latifundia. The state intervention to solve the drought problem has contributed to deepening the problems in the region which, according to Furtado (1989, p.23), are caused by a combination where “the ecological, the economic, the social and the politician intertwined to produce the hard cement on which the underdevelopment of the Northeast was founded. “The resistance of informal rules and its overlapping of formal rules, as Gico Júnior (2017) asserts, was made clear by clarifying that the framework or environment institutional is about the set of organs and rules plus habits and customs rooted in such a way that this framework is the result of the history of a society. Thus, the meaning used in the institutional environment is through the use of the forces of elites that structure the fundamental institutions in order to perpetuate themselves in power.

The Kubitschek government realized that the problems of the Northeast were far beyond the drought phenomenon. He saw the ills caused by drought as a consequence of the way the land had been occupied, the model of exploitation of resources that had been adopted and the exercise of power, which favored the extremely unequal and retained appropriation in the hands of a minority, as a guarantee for the reproduction of the conditions of exploitation and survival of the region. Furtado (1989) states that in view of this understanding, a new development policy for the Northeast was set up, which would not be solved by the creation of yet another public agency. Thus, together with SUDENE, a new managerial and operational model of state action is installed. In other words, the actions began to be considered in the form of a multi-year Master Plan, conceived with the participation of all the bodies involved; therefore, both planning and execution would be carried out in a decentralized manner, based on the coordination of SUDENE that would function based on the guidelines formulated by its Deliberative Council.

Efforts to carry out this endeavor demanded from a political point of view, with the need to organize a regional front to articulate in the National Congress the defense of the interests of the region, to the pragmatic ones, such as the formation of cadres for a technical performance specialized. Factors necessary for the elaboration and implementation of an industrialization policy that met

To the triple objective of giving employment to this mass of underemployed people, of creating a ruling class imbued with the spirit of development and of establishing in the region the capitals formed in other economic activities that currently tend to migrate. (FURTADO, 1989, p. 55).

The presumption here would be the reduction of the participation of subsistence agriculture in the economy and in the retention of the labor force, an objective that would be complemented by the opening of an agricultural frontier in the Maranhão sub-Amazonian belt, aiming at the absorption of the semiarid labor force and a better demographic adjustment. The combination of these objectives sought both to increase the monetization of the economy and to increase productivity in all sectors.

Araújo (1984), in analyzing the effects of SUDENE's actions on the development of the Northeast, states peremptorily, based on the performance of the 1960s and 1970s, that there was a gap between what happened and what was proposed by the GTDN. A reflection on the result of developmental public policies must, in the long run, consider that the actions directed to the development of the Northeast focused mainly on the promotion of industrial production, although agriculture has been the target of modernizing actions.

In this sense, it is worth investigating the effects of state intervention in the period leading up to the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, that is, examining the legacy of the military that, in the course of its exercise of power, inherited from the governments that preceded it a diagnosis of the causes impeding the development of the region, as well as a prescription of the necessary actions to promote the alteration of the conditions that imprisoned the Northeast in the reproduction of a radically unequal appropriation of wealth and, therefore, of the retention of a significant population contingent in the poverty condition.

In practical terms, in the 1950s, it was concluded that it was necessary to set up a steel production, and therefore steel and iron production; as a result of this assertion, the promotion of activities of transformation of these matters was advocated, for example, the need was raised for the incentive to the production of agricultural implements and metallic furniture. It is also important to note, as proposed by the GTDN, whether an industry was created to transform regional resources; as well as whether these initiatives have triggered a multiplier effect by reaching existing industrial sectors such as textiles and clothing as well as ancillary services. Finally, were these propositions, among others, implemented and achieved the projected objectives?

In general, Araújo (1984) affirms that the industrial growth of the Northeast reached the average rate in the 1970s of 9% per year. Also, a diversification of the industrial park was observed, which can be verified through the sectors that more attracted FINOR investments. According to the author, the chemical industry (30%), metallurgical (16%), non-metallic minerals (7%) stand out among non-traditional activities; already in the traditional segments, it was observed that the textile industry (15%), food (10%) and clothing and footwear (3%) appear to benefit most from investments coming from FINOR.

As the investments were directed, on a larger scale, to the non-traditional sectors, a change in the composition of industrial production was noticed, so that in 1960 the contribution of traditional industries to the Value of Industrial Transformation (VTI) of the Northeast from 75% to 50% in 1980. In contrast, between 1950 and 1975, there was a reduction in the share of production of non-durable consumer goods, which decreased from 83% to 48%.

All in all, it can be affirmed that there was progress in the industrialization of the Northeast, which increased and diversified production. However, there was no autonomous industrialization in the region, which consolidated as being markedly dependent and complementary, in relation to the Brazilian industrialization under the command of the Southeast. In fact, a dependency that takes place according to the origin of the financial resources, of the markets where the production is directed and with regard to the acquisition of the production equipments.

As a feature of the industrial production of the Northeast, structured in the period prior to the 1988 Constitution, the fact that of the total paid-in capital of only 26% of the investments originated in the region itself. This was due to the capital with the potential to participate in FINOR's fiscal incentives being concentrated in the Southeast, which resulted in an industrialization subordinated to the interests of the capital located there. As a result, a production matrix was built in which the target market in 1980 was constituted as follows: "national market 43% (25% for São Paulo) and international market, 15%. It should be added that only 10% of the companies produce exclusively for the Northeastern market ". (ARAÚJO, 1984, p.75).

In 1980, when the country was moving towards the end of the military dictatorship, for political opening, for democratization, for free and direct elections, finally, for the National Constituent Assembly of 1987/1988, it could be said that there was a compared to the 1950s, which can be defined as higher and

more diversified. However, the effort made did not reduce the gap that separated the Northeast from the Southeast in terms of wealth generation. And, mainly, the intervention of the State was not able to change the conditions of survival in the region. As explained by Araújo (1984), the average income of the Northeast continued, as in the 1960s, below the average income of Brazil, the Northeast still had the highest income concentration in the country and more than half the workers (53 %) realized a monthly income of up to a minimum wage.

3 THE CONSTITUTIONALIZATION OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PROPOSITIONS AND RESULTS

The action of the state power regarding the obligation to plan and execute public policies, in order to comply with the determinations of the constitutional principles, acquired normative content in the 1988 Constitution, becoming enforceable as a legal duty. Eros Grau (2005) is conclusive in the assertion that we produce a governing constitutional order, in which State and society are compelled to realize a global plan consisting of programs and guidelines that, ultimately, seeks the implementation of a new order. Oliveira (2008) further clarifies that in the preamble of the Constitution it is already explicit as a duty of the Brazilian State to ensure, among other supreme values, the development.

But it should be noted that the public administrator is given the use of the reserve of discretion in the management of state resources and, consequently, in the prioritization of the effectiveness of public policies. However, it should be emphasized that the exercise of direct or indirect public administration, relative to the federal, state or municipal powers, according to what is spelled out in article 37, CAPUT, of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, affirms the need for obedience to “Principles of legality, impersonality, morality, publicity and efficiency”.

Bustamante (2010) emphasizes that principles must be fulfilled in order to maximize their applicability, despite the factual limitations of concrete cases. That is, the public administration must obey the law, not being able to act with total discretion in the decision making, but based on what explicit the rule. It follows from the thinking of Sena Segundo (2007) that, even considering the parameter of discretion, the State and public agents remain the limits of the action referenced in the regulations, since they may incur in the exercise of unconstitutionality. In turn, the principle of impersonality leads the State and its agents to carry out actions exclusively based on the character of impersonality, so that the interest of the collective over private individuals should prevail, just as the public administration should not discriminate a case and overlap it to another. The principle of morality presupposes the action of public power under the bias of ethics and zeal with the republic, in order to hinder threats to the treasury and the smoothness of the exercise of public activities and positions. And the precepts guiding the functioning of the public administration, which must be observed in order to achieve maximum efficiency of the institutional framework and its services, form the principle of efficiency.

In emphasizing the principles concerning the economic issue, particularly those related to the creation of public policies, it is necessary to mention what is provided in article 170 of the Constitution of the Republic of Brazil of 1988, more specifically in section VII, in which it points out the obligation to efforts to reduce regional and social inequalities. In the light of these prolegomena, which deal with the principles governing the performance of public power in all its spheres and purposes, as well as those concerning the fight against regional and social inequalities, a reflection will be made on state actions and their results. The principles set out here are essential elements, as Sena Segundo (2007, p. 396) points out, in order to achieve “the social and material effectiveness of the norms which underpin the structure of the constitutional order”.

More specifically, regarding the constitutional provisions concerning regional development, it can be seen from Article 3, item III, that the fundamental objective of the Republic of Brazil is “the

eradication of poverty, marginalization and the reduction of regional social inequalities.” In effect, a normative framework that laid the foundation on which complementary laws were erected, such as the Poverty Eradication Act, No. 111, where it is prescribed in its Article 1 CAPUT:

Article 1 The Fund for Combating and Eradicating Poverty, created by art. 79 of the Temporary Constitutional Provisions Act (ADCT), to be in force until 2010, aims to enable all Brazilians to access decent levels of livelihood and their resources will be applied in supplementary actions of nutrition, housing, health, education, reinforcement of family income and other programs of relevant social interest, aimed at improving the quality of life.

The promotion of equity between States is welcomed in the Constitution of 1988, in article 4, where this principle is explicitly and roughly lends the state administration in the preparation and conduct of public policies. Article 174, on the other hand, underlies the role of the State, which, as a regulator of economic activity, must exercise, “in the form of the law, the functions of supervision, incentive and planning, which is determinant for the public sector and indicative for the private sector”. This leads to the attribution of a dual function to the State, that is, to monitor the acts of public and private companies and to encourage their encouragement for the development of the regions. This presupposes an element of great importance for the effectiveness of State intervention, as Barral (2007) explains, regarding the promotion of development, that is, that the public authorities can carry out an intervention that does not obstruct the actions of the free Initiative.

The question that Paulo Bonavides (2002) poses regarding the finding that the Constitution of 1988 is a constitution of the social state is a concern that allows us to gauge if we are facing a regime capable of enabling the development of Brazil and, more precisely, the Northeast, on a scale that will lead to overcoming the historical conditions that imprison this region in the situation of economic backwardness and socioeconomic poverty. The jurist argues that the Constitution of 1988 brings in many of its dimensions characters that attribute to it the status of a Social State Constitution; above all, progressed from the point of view of guaranteeing social rights, a Charter was issued in which the mandate of injunction, the mandate of collective security and unconstitutionality by omission were established. “The Brazilian social state is, therefore, a third generation, in the face of these improvements: a State that does not grant only basic social rights, but guarantees them.” (BONAVIDES, 2002, p. 338).

Going along a historical line and, initially, emphasizing an action in the field of education, it should be noted that in 2005 the University for All Program (PROUNI) was regulated under Law 11,096, of January 13, 2005, which made it possible to offer partial and full scholarships to undergraduate students in private institutions in the higher education. In commenting on the recent development of the Northeast, Araújo (2017, p.552) emphasizes this program as an example of improving the country’s educational indexes, since “the Demographic Census of 2000 and 2010 showed that the number of people with total higher education more than doubled, from 5.9 million to 13.5 million people”.

In the year 2012, another significant action to improve the living conditions of the Northeastern population erupted in the Brazilian normative set; through Decree 7,535, of July 26, 2011, the National Program for the Universalisation of Access and Use of Water was instituted, aiming at the democratization of access to water in the rural area, aiming at human consumption, agricultural and food production. This program, although aimed at all the families in the different regions of the country, intends to reach, preferably, the families inserted in the subsistence agriculture in the dry areas of the Northeast.

The evaluation centered in the Northeast, without comparisons with the other regions, leads to the realization that there has been an improvement in both the economy and the quality of life of people. As Araújo (2017) points out, there was a growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the first decade of the 21st century and, at the same time, there was a reduction in the number of people in the

situation of misery. The author draws attention to the fact that, despite the scarcity of rains above the historical average, during this same period there was no record of looting in the commerce of the cities of the interior, nor of the campesinos of mendicants on the roads, as previously seen in times of prolonged droughts.

For Araújo (2017), the adoption of a credit expansion policy for small and medium-sized urban and rural producers, initiated in the Lula da Silva Government and complemented by Dilma Rousseff's Government, combined with public policies for the improvement of education and for food security, basic and essential issues for actions to foster economic growth and social development, as well as a broad income transfer policy based on the Bolsa Família Program. The researcher argues that the development of the Northeast can be observed in the data from the National Survey of Household Sample (PNAD), in which the performance of the health area is positively highlighted in the evaluation of social indicators for the years 1995 to 2005, education and income.

The World Bank (BM), in a report on Brazilian education, which covers the period from 1995 to 2010, evaluates the educational reforms implemented in the two mandates of the governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Lula da Silva. According to (MOTA JÚNIOR; MAUÉS 2014), the BM makes a positive evaluation and highlights the occurrence of advances in these 15 years. The Bank stresses, in particular, that the efforts undertaken in this period have put Brazil on track to meet the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) quality goals for 2021. This positive balance is mainly based on educational statistics indicate the increase in the average number of years of study for the Brazilian population, particularly among the poorest segments of the population; Finally, the WB also drew attention to the increase in the schooling of the workforce, the increase in the level of teacher training and the results of the Brazilian students in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Among the statements of successful actions made by the World Bank (BM), according to (MOTA JÚNIOR; MAUÉS 2014), are the evaluation mechanisms adopted by the governments of Cardoso and Lula (SAEBE, Prova Brasil, IDEB, ENEM, ENADE), which were important instruments for guiding technical and financial actions. However, the BM was critical in the considerations regarding the allocation of public resources to the educational area, considering the investments made in the year 2000 to be insipid and much less than the real needs of the 1.2% of GDP increase in the educational budget carried out in the later decade.

In fact, progress has been made both in the legislative perspective and in the proposal of public policies, but the evaluations show that there is still a need for improvement in education. In the northeast region this is an even more pronounced need. Silva and Almeida (2011) demonstrate, based on data from the Demographic Census of 2000, for example, the educational precariousness of the Northeast, even after the state initiatives implemented; so that, in the Northeast, in 2000, the study average reached 4.52 years, while in the state of São Paulo it reached 6.86 years, which indicates the insufficiency of the actions carried out to alter the socioeconomic reality of this region when compared to other areas of the country.

Therefore, it can be stated that the development occurred in the Northeast was not able to reduce its delay more sharply in relation to the South and Southeast. Araújo (2017) points out, for example, statistical data that denote a precariousness of its socioeconomic conditions; that is, in 2000, the Northeastern economy accounted for 12.4% of the country's economy, although fiscal incentive, infrastructure development and social policies were adopted. In 2010, the Northeast became part of the country's economy with a representation of 13.4%. It can be seen that, in this region that holds 28% of the Brazilian population in its territory, there has been an increase in its share of the national economy of only one percentage point in ten years. When reflecting the average monthly household income, it can be seen that the Northeast is still far below the country, reaching 70% of the national average and only 55% of the Southeast average.

Brazil is still one of the most unequal countries in the world today. In the 1980s, it reached the 12th position among the countries with the worst levels of inequality, even being behind Sierra Leone. As Gaulard (2011) states, Brazil throughout the 20th century experienced a permanent increase in regional and social inequality, so that the country's degradation in terms of income inequality, measured by the GINI¹ coefficient, did not cease even in the periods of robust economic growth, as in the 1970s. It was not until the beginning of the twenty-first century that an inflection of this trend was observed, such that Brazil moved from a rate of 0.593 in 2001 to 0.535 in 2009, a positive result in terms of reducing inequalities among the population strata, which has not yet been observed in any other country in the world. Undoubtedly, state actions are responsible for this scenario, so the normative framework inaugurated with the 1988 Constitution enabled a successful State intervention in reducing regional and social inequalities.

The study of the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), about income inequality in Brazil, indicates that from 2001 to 2012, a period focused on research, the country presented the greatest reduction in inequality, based on the indices registered since the years 1960. In such a way that between 2001 and 2012, it was observed that the income of the poorest 10% grew 550% more than the richest 10%. The IPEA researchers concluded that income from work accounted for 58% of the Gini index, 19% resulted from increases in social security benefits and 13% from the granting of Bolsa Família. Despite this rather significant positive result, in order to constitute the best historical performance, Brazil's inequality in 2012 was among the 12 highest in the world.

The research report of the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), which addresses the evolution of poverty in Brazil, indicates that between 1995 and 2008, a contingent of 12.8 million people left the condition of absolute poverty, understood as average income per capita of up to 0.5 minimum wage. This result led the poverty rate in Brazil to increase from 43.4% to 28.8%, equivalent to a 33.6% reduction. Regarding to the extreme poverty, when the average household income per capita reaches a maximum of ¼ of the minimum wage, there was a 13.1 million drop in Brazilians for the same period, which led to a reduction of 49.8% in the national rate.

But the rate of reduction for both absolute poverty and extreme poverty has not been uniform across all regions of the country. Taking as an example the South, Southeast and Northeast regions, it is observed that in the South the absolute poverty rate fell 47.1%, in the Southeast 34.8% and in the Northeast 28.8%; when the extreme poverty rate is observed, it is observed that in the South the reduction was equivalent to 59.6%, in the Southeast 41.0% and in the Northeast 40.4%. These results showed that the Northeast Region presented the highest rates of absolute poverty (49.7%) and extreme poverty (24.9%) in 2008; while the South Region had the following rates: absolute poverty (18.0%) and extreme poverty (5.5%); and the Southeast Region reached respectively: absolute poverty (29.9%) and extreme poverty (6.9%). The IPEA report reports that the three states with the highest absolute poverty rate in 2008 were in the Northeast Region, ie Alagoas (56.6%), Maranhão (55.9%), and Piauí (52, 9%). These same states also have the highest rates of extreme poverty, in the following order: Alagoas (32.2%), Maranhão (27.2%) and Piauí (26.1%).

Table 1 shows the number of people living in extreme poverty, and the figures indicate, in absolute numbers, how urgent efforts are needed to combat the factors that provoke this social phenomenon. It is observed for the Northeast an amount equivalent to 3,450,627 people surviving in this situation, that is, a rate of 83.8% higher than the number of people surviving in this same condition in the Southeast region. Also, approximately 50% of Brazilians living in extreme poverty live in the Northeast.

¹ The GINI coefficient measures the income inequality among the population strata, indicating that the closer to zero the better the income distribution, and conversely, the more the index is away from zero, the worse the inequality is, division of income.

TABLE 1 - Number of people in Extreme Poverty condition - 2014

Regions	Quantity
North	813.444
Northeast	3.450.627
Southeast	1.877.291
South	403.415
Midwest	254.721
Brazil	6.799.502

Source: Santos, 2017.

Data on poverty rates show that, in addition to economic growth, which is important for achieving significant results, it is necessary to adopt public policies that boost social protection in states where social problems are more substantial. As Cohn (1995) explains, in a situation such as Brazil, characterized by deep inequality, in which populations are found in absolute poverty and extreme poverty, social policies and programs directed at poverty alleviation and the overcoming of poverty. In the first case, it is necessary to direct immediate policies, of assistencialist character, to attend the people who are in the condition of high vulnerability. Policies aiming at overcoming poverty must have a medium-term and long-term profile that are based on a sustainable development perspective, thus combining economic growth with social equity.

Indeed, the critique of development scholars, such as Silva and Almeida (2011), makes clear that for the promotion of the development of the Northeast, the obstacle is no longer in the absence of diagnosis or legislation. So what is needed now is to transform what is idealized into concrete actions, but quantitatively and qualitatively in accordance with the dimensioned need, as there is still a gap to be transposed when one observes the living conditions of those in the floors from the building of the social structure in relation to those at the top.

This line of thinking is followed by long-standing researchers, such as Celso Furtado (1999), in his latest writings, and contemporaneous ones, among others, Silva and Almeida (2011). This is because, as already noted, public policies were conceived and implemented, but with a volume of resources and / or coverage of beneficiaries or spatial coverage less than ideal to promote economic growth and an improvement in the survival conditions of the Northeastern population in the speed and in the medium term, to bring the Northeast to a position of greater balance with the more developed regions of the country.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The representation of the miserable Northeast was a creation that was erected in the mass of the destitute formed by the small besiegers and landless farmers affected by the damaging effects of the droughts phenomenon, that reproduced in a cycle that dragged to the poverty and absolute poverty a population contingent always growing. This idealization of the Northeast has the identification of the long droughts as being the determining cause of the ills that reach their inhabitants reluctantly. A construction that was born in literature, reached the national collective consciousness and influenced the technical-scientific thinking. The actions of the state in the region, from the first imperial interventions to modernity inaugurated by Getulism, focused on the attempt to mitigate the harmful effects of the droughts. However, the power structure, which was based on the authoritarian rule of latifundia owners, agricultural producers and cattle ranchers, dominated by public offices and functions, reverted State

actions for their own benefit, which guaranteed the reproduction of the system of expropriation of labor and of the patriarchal power, exerted by the “colonels” of the sertão and sugar “barons”.

The creation of São Francisco Hydroelectric and Electric Company (CHESF) in the Getulio Vargas Government is a significant first state action in the quest to provide the Northeast with an industrial infrastructure, therefore, which was not directly linked to the interests of sugar exporters and cotton farmers or cattle ranchers. However, the proposal of a set of articulated actions, intending a radical change in the productive structure of the region, came with the formation of the Working Group for the Development of the Northeast (GTDN), which, in the 1950s, brought to light a technical diagnosis - scientific at the same time, precise in the identification of economic and environmental problems and creative in the formulation of strategic actions, which aimed at increasing economic productivity, the formalization of the labor market and the circulation of monetary flows. The rationality of the GTDN's work undermined the local power structure, since it proposed a prioritization of the activities and actions to be carried out from a wide debate, with technicians from several federal and state agencies, which would result in the formulation of a Plan Director.

The advent of the military dictatorship has cooled the impact of the implementation of the actions proposed in the GTDN report, since there was an alignment of the local forces, that is, of the old oligarchic leaders, with the central power. In spite of this, the implementation of part of the proposed actions was verified, mainly those directed to the industrialization, so that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the region occurred, but the mechanisms that generated the accumulation of riches in the hands were kept intact of a minority and the reproduction of a mass of workers with derisory salaries; thus not constituting a relevant consumer market and neither irradiating the positive effects of the dynamics of industrial production on the other sectors of the economy.

These are the driving forces behind the debates in the 1987/1988 constituency, which are extremely fierce, as Eros Grau (2005) recalls, on combating regional inequality and poverty. Ultimately, regulations were created that were extremely favorable to state actions that promoted development. The 1988 Constitution, characteristically a social state, formulated a guarantee of social rights that proved capable of altering the radically unequal social structure existing in Brazil and, mainly, in the Northeast.

However, analyzes of statistical data, presented by national and international institutions, as well as by researchers from different areas, demonstrate that a Herculean effort is still necessary to promote social justice in Brazil and in the Northeast, above all, that a strong demand is required. Political struggle to each new legislative context to ensure the necessary resources and their rational application and devoid of political interests historically rooted in a patriarchal tradition.

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