Military Police and Vulnerable Communities: Challenges and Opportunities for Building Trust

Military Police And Vulnerable Communities: Challenges And Opportunities For Building Trust

Arleison Glauber Pinheiro Sousa – Bachelor of Laws, Lutheran University Center of Santarém arleisonglauber@gmail.com

Fredson Souza dos Santos - Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics, UNIASSELV, fredson432@hotmail.com

Jó Oliveira Rocha - Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics, FAFIBE, jo7693102@gmail.com

Paula Nascimento do Carmo – Bachelor of Social Work, UNINTA, pdocarmo156@gmail.com

Summary

This article analyzes an episode of institutional conflict that occurred in the municipality of Jacareacanga, in the state of Pará, involving public security agents and members of the Munduruku indigenous people.
The event originated after the arrest of individuals suspected of murdering a member of the Munduruku indigenous community. Part of the community contested the actions of the state justice system and demanded the application of traditional community justice mechanisms. Amidst the escalating difficulties, a local police station was set on fire, and the police officers had to leave the municipality, traveling approximately 400 kilometers along the BR230 highway to the municipality of Itaituba. The study discusses the challenges of police action in culturally diverse and vulnerable territories in the face of the need for intercultural dialogue between states and traditional communities.

Keywords: police; challenge; indigenous people; crime; vulnerability.

Abstract

This article analyzes an episode of institutional conflict that occurred in the municipality of Jacareacanga, in the state of Pará, involving public security agents and members of the Munduruku indigenous people. The event originated after the arrest of individuals suspected of murdering a member of the Munduruku indigenous community. Part of the community contested the actions of the state justice system and demanded the application of traditional community justice mechanisms.

Amidst the escalating difficulties, a local police station was set on fire, and the police officers had to leave the municipality, traveling approximately 400 kilometers along the BR230 highway to the municipality of Itaituba. The study discusses the challenges of police action in culturally diverse and vulnerable territories in the face of the need for intercultural dialogue between states and traditional communities.

Keywords: police; challenges; indigenous peoples; crime; vulnerability.

01- INTRODUCTION

The role of public security institutions in socially vulnerable contexts.

This constitutes one of the main challenges in managing public security in contemporary Brazil.

territories marked by profound socioeconomic inequalities, precarious conditions, and lack of access to

Public services and recurring social conflicts, the presence and intervention of the police frequently

They are perceived ambiguously by the local population, oscillating between the expectation of protection and

Institutional distrust. In this scenario, the construction of trusting relationships between the State and

The community becomes a fundamental element for promoting social order and guaranteeing...

rights.

In the Amazon region, these challenges take on even more complex dimensions due to...

The sociocultural diversity that characterizes the territory. Municipalities that are home to indigenous communities.

They coexist with multiple forms of social organization, their own normative systems, and mechanisms.

traditional methods of conflict resolution. As Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (2012) points out, the

Indigenous peoples have their own socio-political systems that regulate social relations and guarantee

Community cohesion, often distinct from the formal legal structures of the Brazilian State.

In the national legal context, the recognition of cultural diversity and the rights of

Indigenous peoples find support in the 1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

especially in articles 231 and 232, which guarantee indigenous peoples the right to maintain

their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs, and traditions. Such recognition represents a

Significant progress in consolidating a constitutional model that seeks to respect plurality.

cultural presence in Brazilian territory.

However, despite this legal recognition, challenges still persist in the coordination between

state institutions and traditional forms. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), the

The coexistence of different normative systems within the same social space highlights the

The existence of so-called legal pluralism, in which state norms and community norms coexist.

And sometimes, they become tense.

The municipality of Jacareacanga, located in the southwest of the state of Pará, presents a scenario

representative of these tensions. The region is home to several indigenous communities and has

specific sociocultural characteristics that directly influence relationships within the population.

local and state public security institutions. In this context, episodes of conflict

The interaction between police forces and indigenous communities reveals the challenges that exist in mediation between them.

different conceptions of justice, authority, and conflict resolution.

Given this reality, the objective of this article is to analyze the episode that occurred in

municipality of Jacareacanga, seeking to understand the existing tensions between the performance of security

The aim is to contribute to this discussion of state-run public institutions and traditional forms of indigenous social organization.

for reflection on the challenges of police work in culturally diverse territories, as well as

for the development of public policies that reconcile guaranteeing public safety with the

Respect for cultural diversity and the rights of indigenous peoples.

As specific objectives, this study seeks to:

• Analyze the sociocultural context of the municipality of Jacareacanga;

• To understand the factors that contributed to the conflict between the police and the indigenous community;

• To discuss the challenges of police work in culturally diverse territories;

• To reflect on public policies capable of reconciling public safety and respect for cultural diversity.

Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 03/14/2026 | Accepted: 03/16/2026 | Publication: 03/18/2026
02 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The discussion about the role of public security institutions in socially sensitive contexts.

diverse issues require an understanding of the relationships established between the State, society, and different systems.

regulations in place in certain territories.

In societies marked by cultural diversity, as is the case in Brazil, conflicts

Social disputes often involve not only conflicts of interest between differing conceptions of

justice, authority and social organization.

In this sense, the concept of legal pluralism becomes fundamental to understanding the

coexistence of different systems for producing norms and resolving conflicts within a

same society. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), legal pluralism refers to-

Regarding the simultaneous presence of multiple normative systems that regulate social life,

going beyond the limits of formal state law. This phenomenon is especially evident in

contexts where traditional communities maintain their own systems of social regulation based on

Customs, traditions, and collective forms of decision-making.

In the case of indigenous communities, these normative systems are deeply interconnected.

with the cultural, social, and political organization of peoples. As Manuel Carneiro da Cunha points out.

(2012), indigenous peoples have developed their own forms of organization throughout their history.

social and internal conflict resolution mechanisms, based on community values, in

The authority of traditional leaders and the maintenance of collective harmony. These systems, although

Distinct from the legal model, they play a fundamental role in the organization of social life within

of the communities.

The 1988 Federal Constitution represented an important milestone in the recognition of

Indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil. However, in the field of public security, such challenges

have become even more evident. Police action in territories with a strong presence of

Traditional communities demand not only the application of existing law, but also sensitivity.

cultural and mediation skills.

In this way, understanding the social, cultural, and political dynamics present in territories

Indigenous peoples' rights become essential for the formulation of more effective and respectful public policies.

Cultural diversity. The construction of state action strategies based on intercultural dialogue.

This can contribute to reducing institutional conflicts and strengthening cooperative relationships between

community and public institutions.

Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 03/14/2026 | Accepted: 03/16/2026 | Publication: 03/18/2026
2.1 - Public Security in Vulnerable Territories

The actions of public security institutions in socially vulnerable territories have

been widely debated in sociological and criminological literature. According to Soares (2015), the

The historical absence of the State in certain regions contributes to the construction of fragile relationships.

between the population and police institutions, hindering the building of institutional trust. In

In many cases, the state's presence occurs predominantly through police action, which reinforces

The perception of social control at the expense of promoting rights.

In the Amazonian regions, this reality takes on even more complex dimensions due to...

territorial dimensions, logistical difficulties, and existing cultural diversity. Municipalities

located in remote areas face structural limitations related to the reduced number of

security agents, due to the difficulty of accessing essential public services.

2.2 - INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Brazilian indigenous peoples have their own systems of social organization, based on

community structures involving traditional leaders, community councils, and mechanisms

typical decision-making processes. According to Cunha (2009), these forms of organization are

results of historical and cultural processes that structure collective life in the favelas.

In the case of the Munduruku people, present in the Alto Tapajós region, the social organization is

deeply linked to community relations and respect for traditional leadership. A

Internal conflict resolution often occurs through collective mechanisms of

deliberation, in which the community actively participates in decision-making.

2.3 - LEGAL PLURALISM

The concept of legal pluralism refers to the coexistence of multiple normative systems.

within the same society. For Santos (2007), culturally diverse societies present

different forms of norm production and conflict resolution mechanisms, which can

to coexist with or come into tension with the state legal system. In the indigenous context, pluralism

The legal system manifests itself in the coexistence between Brazilian state law and normative systems.

traditional practices of indigenous communities. This coexistence can generate institutional conflicts when

certain cultural practices come into contact with norms established by the legal system.

national legal system.

03 – METHODOLOGY

This research is characterized as a qualitative study, focused on

understanding the relationships between the actions of public security institutions and the dynamics

sociocultural factors present in indigenous territories.

The study uses a case study strategy, analyzing a specific episode that occurred in

municipality of Jacareacanga.

The research is based on documentary and bibliographical analysis, using documents.

institutional reports, news articles, and academic literature related to public safety and security issues.

Indigenous rights.

The data analysis was conducted through qualitative interpretation of the information.

collected.

04 - DISCUSSION

Vulnerable communities are characterized by low socioeconomic indicators and high risk factors.

Violence rates. In these areas, the presence of the State is often evident.

predominantly through the police, expanding the institutional responsibility of the corporation.

An example of a situation that occurred following these patterns of work difficulties and

Social misunderstanding occurred in the municipality of Jacareacanga – Pará in the year 2012.

The municipality of Jacareacanga is located in the Southwest Pará mesoregion and...

Itaituba microregion. It borders the municipality of Itaituba to the north and the state of Mato Grosso to the south.

Grosso, bordering the municipalities of Itaituba and Novo Progresso to the east, and the State of [unclear] to the west.

Amazonas.

The city of Jacareacanga, the municipal seat, is located on the left bank of the river.

Tapajós, located approximately 1,149 km from Belém as the crow flies, is today the most important municipal seat.

located away from the state capital. It has geographic coordinates 06°14'06" South latitude and 57°46'31" South latitude.

longitude West of Greenwich.

According to official data, the Municipality of Jacareacanga has an area of 53,911.22 km².

comprising 4.32% of the total area of the State of Pará, which places it among the ten largest municipalities.

Pará state. Approximately 90% of its land is bathed by the Tapajós River basin, while the remaining 10%

The remaining areas belong to the Amazon River basin. They are located approximately [distance] from the capital Belém.

1,149 km away, in such a remote region the presence of the state is a ghost.

The municipality is characterized by having an indigenous population that is larger than the general population.

"White," estimated at approximately 14,216 inhabitants of the Munduruku ethnic group. This population

Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 03/14/2026 | Accepted: 03/16/2026 | Publication: 03/18/2026

It is spread across 103 villages, 54 of which have more than five families.

The villages are organized into 9 hub villages, namely: Sai Cinza Village, Kato Village, Village

Caroçal do Rio das Tropas, Restinga Village, Munduruku Village, São Francisco Mission Village,

Santa Maria Village, Teles Pires Village and Jacareacanga Hub.

In this context, the presence of state institutions often faces challenges.

Logistical and cultural factors. Indigenous communities maintain their own systems of governance and problem-solving.

of conflicts, based on traditional leadership and community norms.

When a crime occurs within these communities, there may be disagreements about which party is responsible.

Which system of justice should prevail: the national legal system or traditional indigenous practices?

The episode analyzed occurred in 2012 and began after the death of an indigenous person.

belonging to the Munduruku ethnic group. The Military Police arrested the suspects (who were not

Indigenous people) involved in the crime were kept at the local police station for investigation.

However, members of the indigenous community expressed opposition to state custody of the

suspects, arguing that the case should be resolved according to the traditional mechanisms of

community. Tensions increased as indigenous groups began demanding the surrender of the

detainees. The situation quickly escalated into an institutional crisis. Amid the conflict,

The local Military Police detachment was set on fire, endangering the physical safety of those present.

Police officers, officials present, and those arrested. Given the seriousness of the situation amid escalating protests.

Given the impossibility of maintaining security at the location, the police opted for a strategic withdrawal.

from the municipality, towards the city of Itaituba, considered the nearest urban center with greater

institutional structure.

The journey took place along the BR-230 highway, covering approximately 400 kilometers.

kilometers. This withdrawal did not represent an abandonment of the institutional function, but rather a measure

necessary to preserve the integrity of the agents and enable the reorganization of activities

police officers.

Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 03/14/2026 | Accepted: 03/16/2026 | Publication: 03/18/2026

Figure 1

Indigenous people set fire to a Military Police detachment in southwestern Pará.

Figure 2:

Indigenous people set fire to a Military Police detachment in southwestern Pará.
https://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2012/07/indios-botam-fogo-em-destacamento-da-pm- In 2012, the

municipality only had a small detachment of the military police, which

It functioned in a precarious manner. Only in 2013, after this episode, did the municipality of

Jacareacanga now has a standardized police station, like the rest of the city.

state. The case highlights one of the main challenges of governance in indigenous territories: the

coexistence of distinct legal systems.

The Brazilian Federal Constitution recognizes the cultural and social rights of indigenous peoples.

including their own forms of social organization. However, crimes such as homicide are

These crimes are defined by the Brazilian Penal Code and fall under the jurisdiction of the state justice system.

This normative conflict can generate tensions when indigenous communities consider that the

State intervention violates their traditional systems of conflict resolution.

For security forces, this scenario demands specific preparation and intercultural knowledge.

and mediation protocols involving indigenous leaders and public institutions.

4.1 - EXPANDING THE CASE DISCUSSION

The incident in Jacareacanga highlights how institutional conflicts can emerge.

when different conceptions of justice come into contact. For state institutions, the application

Criminal law follows formal procedures established in the Brazilian legal system.

On the other hand, for many indigenous communities, conflict resolution is associated with mechanisms

collective efforts to repair and restore community balance.

This divergence of perspectives can lead to situations of mutual misunderstanding. While the

Police action seeks to ensure the application of current criminal law; communities can

interpret certain interventions as external interferences in their social autonomy and

cultural.

In this sense, the literature on public safety highlights the importance of building

Trust relationships between police institutions and local communities. The absence of dialogue.

Institutional reform can contribute to the escalation of tensions, especially in territories where...

The history of state presence is marked by discontinuities.

Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 03/14/2026 | Accepted: 03/16/2026 | Publication: 03/18/2026
Figure 3:

Community lecture on child and youth vulnerability
Source: 3rd Sergeant PM Aramanahy, Private PM Thales, Private PM Ruan, Private PM Edvane. Year 2025.

4.2 - LEGAL ANALYSIS

Relationship between the Brazilian state legal system and traditional dispute resolution systems.

Conflicts within indigenous communities are a relevant topic in the field of constitutional law.

Legal anthropology and human rights. Many indigenous communities have mechanisms

suitable for resolving internal conflicts, based on traditions, community leadership and norms.

cultural traditions passed down through generations.

The 1988 Federal Constitution explicitly recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples.

Article 231 establishes that the social organization and customs of indigenous peoples are recognized.

Languages, beliefs, and traditions. This recognition represents a historic advancement in law.

Brazilian, as it affirms cultural diversity as a constitutional principle.

The concept of legal pluralism refers to the coexistence of different normative systems.

within the same territory. In the indigenous context, this means that in addition to formal state law,

There are traditional normative systems that regulate social life within communities.

Law No. 6,001/1973, known as the Indian Statute, provides in its article 57 that it is tolerated

the application of disciplinary sanctions by the indigenous communities themselves against their members,

provided that such sanctions are not cruel or degrading.

Despite the legal recognition of indigenous customs, conflicts arise when crimes are committed.

Crimes considered serious under national law occur within villages. In these

In certain situations, the State tends to assert its competence for investigation and prosecution, especially

in cases of homicide, sexual violence, or drug trafficking.

ILO Convention 169, ratified by Brazil, reinforces the State's duty to respect the

social and legal institutions of indigenous peoples. Article 9 stipulates that traditional methods

The rules used by indigenous peoples to deal with infractions must always be respected.

compatible with internationally recognized human rights. Among the main challenges

There is a need to harmonize different legal systems and avoid cultural impositions on the part of

of the State and guarantee the protection of the fundamental rights of all people involved.

Legal analysis demonstrates that the Brazilian legal system seeks to balance two principles.

Fundamental principles: respect for cultural diversity and the uniform application of criminal law. Dialogue

Intercultural cooperation between state institutions and indigenous leaders emerges as an important path for

To resolve conflicts and strengthen justice in culturally diverse contexts.

4.3 - Intercultural Public Security

The development of public policies focused on security in indigenous territories requires...

Adopting strategies that take into account the sociocultural diversity present in these spaces.

Intercultural training for public security agents is frequently cited as one of the

Key measures to reduce institutional conflicts.

Training programs that include content related to indigenous anthropology,

Human rights and conflict mediation can contribute to a more sensitive approach to...

cultural specificities of these communities.

Furthermore, the creation of permanent spaces for dialogue between indigenous leaders and

State institutions can strengthen conflict prevention mechanisms. Experiences

International studies demonstrate that community participation in the development of security policies is crucial.

It contributes to reducing tensions and strengthening institutional trust.

5.0 - FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the incident in Jacareacanga highlights the complexity of police work.

in territories marked by the presence of indigenous peoples and the coexistence of different systems

cultural, social, and legal aspects. In contexts like the Amazon, the State's role goes beyond...

a strictly institutional dimension of public security, also involving related issues

to the recognition of cultural diversity, the guarantee of collective rights, and the need for dialogue.

between different forms of social organization.

Year VI, v.1 2026 | Submission: 03/14/2026 | Accepted: 03/16/2026 | Publication: 03/18/2026
Figure 4:

Community lecture on child and youth vulnerability

Source: 3rd Sergeant PM Aramanahy, Private PM Thales, Private PM Ruan, Private PM Edvane. Year 2025.

Conflict situations between state agents and indigenous communities often reveal

Structural tensions between state legal logic and existing traditional normative systems.

in these territories. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) argues, societies

Culturally diverse are characterized by the coexistence of multiple forms of production.

Norms and justice, a phenomenon called legal pluralism. In this sense, the understanding of

The social dynamics present in indigenous territories demand the recognition of their legitimacy.

different systems of social regulation.

In the Brazilian context, the recognition of cultural diversity and the autonomy of peoples

Indigenous peoples find legal support in the 1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

especially in articles 231 and 232, which guarantee indigenous peoples the right to maintain

their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs, and traditions. In addition, the Convention

Regulation No. 169 of the International Labour Organization establishes that States must respect the

social and cultural institutions of these peoples. From an anthropological point of view, studies by Manuela

Carneiro da Cunha (2012) highlights that indigenous peoples have their own systems of

political organization and conflict resolution. Similarly, Darcy Ribeiro (1996) emphasizes that the

Understanding indigenous realities requires historical and cultural sensitivity on the part of...

state institutions.

Given this scenario, episodes like the one that occurred in Jacareacanga should not be interpreted...

not as isolated events, but as manifestations of structural challenges related to

State action in socio-culturally diverse territories.

• Intercultural training for public safety officers;

• Creation of institutional protocols for mediation and conflict prevention in indigenous territories;

• Strengthening institutional presence in remote regions of the Amazon;

• Promoting ongoing dialogue with traditional leaders.

Therefore, building more balanced relationships between state institutions and the people is crucial.

Indigenous peoples depend on the recognition of legal pluralism and the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

as a guiding principle for public action.

REFERENCES

BRAZIL. Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil of 1988. BRAZIL. Federal Senate, 1988.

BRAZIL. Penal Code. Decree-Law No. 2,848, of December 7, 1940. Brasília: Presidency of the Republic, 1940.

BRAZIL. Law No. 6,001, of December 19, 1973. Statute of the Indian. Brasília: Presidency of the Republic, 1973.

CUNHA, Manuela Carneiro da. Culture in Quotation Marks and Other Essays. São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2009.

FUNAI – National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous peoples in Brazil: cultural and territorial diversity. Brasília: FUNAI.

LITTLE, Paul. Social territories and traditional peoples in Brazil: towards an anthropology of territoriality. Brasília: University of Brasília, 2002.

International Labour Organization. Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. Geneva: ILO, 1989.

RIBEIRO, Darcy. The Indians and Civilization: The Integration of Indigenous Populations in Modern Brazil. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996.

SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. Towards a democratic revolution of justice. São Paulo: Cortez, 2007.

YIN, Robert K. Case study: planning and methods. 5th ed. Porto Alegre: Bookman, 2015.