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IMPACTS OF AGRARIAN CONFLICTS IN RONDÔNIA: REPERCUSSIONS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

IMPACTOS DOS CONFLITOS AGRÁRIOS EM RONDÔNIA: REPERCUSSÕES PARA A SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA

IMPACTOS DE LOS CONFLICTOS AGRARIOS EN RONDÔNIA: REPERCUSIONES PARA LA SEGURIDAD PÚBLICA

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the impacts of agrarian conflicts on public security in the state of Rondônia, with emphasis on the role of the Military Police (PMRO). Based on a qualitative and descriptive approach, the study examines institutional documents, official reports, and relevant scientific literature, highlighting that the Amazonian land tenure crisis generates severe social, economic, and operational effects. It identifies that the absence of land regularization, land grabbing, and the omission of responsible agencies intensify rural violence, placing on the PMRO the role of mediator in disputes without adequate interinstitutional support. The findings demonstrate that PMRO's actions occur mostly in a reactive manner and under adverse conditions, resulting in functional overload and risks to institutional legitimacy. The study concludes that overcoming these conflicts requires the formulation of specific protocols, the strengthening of territorial governance, and the articulation between public security agencies, land administration authorities, and organized civil society.

Keywords: Agrarian Conflicts. Public Security. Military Police. Territorial Governance. Amazon.

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RESUMO
O artigo analisa os impactos dos conflitos agrários sobre a segurança pública no estado de Rondônia, com ênfase na atuação da Polícia Militar (PMRO). Fundamentado em abordagem qualitativa e descritiva, o estudo examina documentos institucionais, relatórios oficiais e literatura científica relevante, evidenciando que a crise fundiária amazônica produz graves efeitos sociais, econômicos e operacionais. Identifica-se que a ausência de regularização territorial, a grilagem e a omissão de órgãos responsáveis intensificam a violência no campo, deslocando para a PMRO o papel de mediadora de disputas sem apoio interinstitucional adequado. Os achados demonstram que a atuação da PMRO ocorre, majoritariamente, de forma reativa e sob condições adversas, resultando em sobrecarga funcional e riscos à legitimidade institucional. Conclui-se que a superação dos conflitos requer a formulação de protocolos específicos, o fortalecimento da governança territorial e a articulação entre segurança pública, órgãos fundiários e sociedade civil organizada.

Palavras-chave: Conflitos Agrários. Segurança Pública. Polícia Militar. Governança Territorial. Amazônia.

RESUMEN
El artículo analiza los impactos de los conflictos agrarios sobre la seguridad pública en el estado de Rondônia, con énfasis en el papel de la Policía Militar (PMRO). Basado en un enfoque cualitativo y descriptivo, el estudio examina documentos institucionales, informes oficiales y literatura científica relevante, evidenciando que la crisis de tenencia de tierras en la Amazonía genera graves efectos sociales, económicos y operativos. Se identifica que la ausencia de regularización territorial, la usurpación de tierras (grilagem) y la omisión de los organismos responsables intensifican la violencia rural, asignando a la PMRO el papel de mediadora en disputas sin el apoyo interinstitucional adecuado. Los hallazgos demuestran que la actuación de la PMRO ocurre, en su mayoría, de manera reactiva y en condiciones adversas, lo que provoca sobrecarga funcional y riesgos para la legitimidad institucional. Se concluye que la superación de estos conflictos requiere la formulación de protocolos específicos, el fortalecimiento de la gobernanza territorial y la articulación entre la seguridad pública, los organismos de tierras y la sociedad civil organizada.

Palabras clave: Conflictos Agrarios. Seguridad Pública. Policía Militar. Gobernanza Territorial. Amazonía.

1 INTRODUCTION

The state of Rondônia, located in the northern region of Brazil and part of the Legal Amazon, has a history of territorial occupation marked by intense processes of colonization, agricultural expansion and exploitation of natural resources (Becker, 2005; Sauer & Marés, 2013). This process, induced by federal policies in the 1970s, resulted in a profound land reconfiguration that, although it contributed to economic growth, also generated a complex network of conflicts over land ownership and use (INCRA, 2020; Coy, 1987).

The legal insecurity of land, land grabbing, and infrastructure projects without adequate consultation with local communities have become central elements in Rondônia's agrarian conflicts (CPT, 2021; Treccani et al., 2020). In this context, public security emerges as a strategic and, at the same time, vulnerable dimension. The Military Police of Rondônia (PMRO), often called upon in situations of repossession and land disputes, acts as a last resort in the face of the omission or inefficiency of other agencies (Costa, 2016).

The present research has as its central problem the following question: what are the main impacts of agrarian conflicts in the state of Rondônia and how do they affect public security? It is based on the hypothesis that agrarian conflicts generate serious social and economic damage, compromising territorial stability and overloading the performance of the PMRO, which operates under unfavorable institutional conditions (Mesquita, 2011).

The general objective is to analyze how agrarian conflicts affect public security in the state of Rondônia. To this end, the specific objectives are: (i) to identify the main causes of agrarian conflicts in the state; (ii) verify its social and economic impacts; (iii) evaluate the performance of the Military Police in dealing with these situations; and (iv) suggest actions to strengthen the performance of the public security system in these conflicts.

The study is justified by the need to understand, from the perspective of public administration and territorial governance, the institutional consequences of a chronic land crisis. Such an understanding can support proposals for more effective inter-institutional articulation, based on public policies for conflict prevention and strengthening of the state presence in critical rural areas (Sachs, 2004; UN, 2015).

2 AGRARIAN CONFLICTS IN RONDÔNIA: ORIGINS AND DYNAMICS

The land history of Rondônia is deeply intertwined with the process of occupation of the Legal Amazon, driven by geopolitical strategies of the federal government from the 1970s onwards. During the military regime, policies of internalization of development fostered migration to the North region, promoting the colonization of vast areas previously considered peripheral. Programs such as POLONOROESTE and PLANAFLORO, financed by

multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, made it possible to open roads (such as BR-364), install settlement projects and grant credits to small producers (Pedlowski et al., 1999; Bizzo, 1999). However, these programs failed to implement effective land regularization mechanisms, which led to overlapping titles and irregular occupation of public lands.

The absence of territorial planning and the institutional weakness of the State in accompanying the occupation have made Rondônia one of the epicenters of land grabbing in Brazil. Land grabbing, defined as the illegal appropriation of land through the falsification of documents, has become a recurrent practice in areas with agricultural or timber potential (Sauer & Marés, 2013). This practice has evolved over the decades, moving from an informal logic to sophisticated institutional mechanisms, involving notary offices, notary offices, political influence networks, and even public agents (Rocha, 2022).

In the 2000s, with the advance of agribusiness and mining (including illegal mining), the pressure on public lands increased. Conflicts involving peasants, squatters, indigenous people, quilombolas and large landowners have become more frequent, especially in areas of expansion of the agricultural frontier, such as Buritis, Machadinho, Nova Mamoré and Candeias do Jamari. Between 2010 and 2022, Rondônia remained among the states with the highest number of land conflicts in Brazil, according to reports by the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT, 2022). The years 2016 and 2019 saw the highest peaks in agrarian violence, with several cases of forced evictions, murders, and controversial repossessions (CPT, 2021).

A critical factor in the intensification of conflicts in Rondônia is the actions of private militias, often linked to the interests of ranchers, miners, and illegal loggers. These militias operate with a high degree of organization and impose fear as a strategy for expelling traditional communities. Impunity and the slowness of the Judiciary reinforce this cycle of violence, since legal actions for repossession are often carried out without guarantees of prior mediation or compensation (Chagas, 2019; Michalski & Borges, 2022).

Emblematic cases, such as the Corumbiara massacre (1995), the conflict in Buritis (2016) and recent episodes, illustrate the recurrence of institutionalized violence in the countryside. These episodes reveal the pattern of disproportionate use of force, with the deaths of peasant and indigenous leaders and the destruction of entire communities. The literature highlights that these episodes are not punctual, but part of a structural process of omission by the State and fragility of national agrarian policy (Estevam & Marques, 2015; CPT, 2017).

The territorialization of land violence is evident: the most conflicting municipalities coincide with areas of greater economic pressure, higher land concentration and infrastructure for the flow of production. Cities such as Porto Velho, Ariquemes, Jaru, Cujubim and Chupinguaia concentrate dozens of occurrences recorded annually, according to data compiled by the CPT (2017, 2021, 2022).

The performance of the security forces, particularly the Military Police of Rondônia (PMRO), in this context, becomes reactive and limited. The institution is activated in repossessions, judicial escorts and containment of armed conflicts, but does not have specific protocols, adequate training or inter-institutional support to work in land mediation (Costa, 2016; Mesquita, 2011). In practice, the PMRO acts as an instrument for the enforcement of judicial decisions, without articulation with public land policies or conflict prevention guidelines.

In summary, agrarian conflicts in Rondônia stem from a disorderly occupation model, the absence of territorial governance and institutional connivance with illegal practices. The absence of a continuous public policy of land regularization and the predominance of an extractivist-colonial logic result in a spiral of conflicts, with severe repercussions for human rights, institutional stability, and public security. The worsening of these conflicts requires a response that goes beyond police repression, involving state planning, agrarian justice, and structured social participation (Treccani et al., 2020; Oliveira & Bursztyn, 2005).

3 IMPACTS OF AGRARIAN CONFLICTS ON PUBLIC SECURITY

Agrarian conflicts in the state of Rondônia have a direct and structural impact on the public security system. The dispute over land, marked by the absence of land regularization and the actions of armed militias, has produced an environment of permanent instability in rural areas. According to the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT, 2022), Rondônia concentrated more than 60% of the land invasions recorded in Brazil between 2011 and 2022, configuring a scenario of social tension that requires complex and inter-institutional responses.

Agrarian violence manifests itself in multiple forms: murders of community leaders, threats, destruction of homes, expulsion of families and confrontations between armed individuals. In several locations, such as Buritis, Candeias, Nova Mamoré and Chupinguaia, murders of small farmers and human rights defenders are recorded, often without effective judicial resolution. According to Silva et al. (2020), Porto Velho accounts for approximately 22% of rural homicides in the state, evidencing the overlap of crime and land conflict in areas of economic expansion.

In this scenario, the Military Police of Rondônia (PMRO) plays a central, albeit limited, role. Their presence is required in repossession actions, ostensive patrols and judicial escorts. However, the corporation faces severe operational restrictions, especially in relation to the absence of specific protocols for acting in areas of land conflict. The current police doctrine still lacks regulations that guide action in sensitive contexts, which require both the guarantee of public order and respect for the fundamental rights of the populations involved.

In addition, the deployment of PMRO personnel to meet demands in the field, often in areas of difficult access, negatively impacts ordinary urban policing. The operations require great logistics, involving vehicles, weapons, communication and inter-institutional coordination. In the absence of such structures, the PMRO operates with tactical fragility, subjecting its members to physical risks and legal liability for any excesses (Costa, 2016; Bispo et al., 2024).

Another factor that aggravates the impact on public security is the absence of coordinated action among state agencies. It is recurrent that judicial orders for repossession are executed without the proper accompaniment of representatives of INCRA, the Public Defender's Office or the Public Prosecutor's Office. This overloads the PMRO, which is perceived by the communities as an agent of repression, and not as a force for pacification. The lack of articulation between the institutions of the justice system compromises both the effectiveness of operations and the institutional legitimacy of the security forces (Bispo et al., 2024).

In addition, the legal insecurity of the territories and impunity in cases of land grabbing stimulate a logic of violent resolution of conflicts, which requires public security to play a role for which it was not conceived. The PMRO, in this context, acts as a guarantor of a precarious territorial order, in the absence of a structured and institutionalized conflict mediation policy (Mesquita, 2011).

From an ethical and political point of view, this configuration compromises the institutional legitimacy of the Military Police. As Treccani et al. (2020) highlight, isolated repressive action, without the support of integrated public policies, reinforces the perception of selectivity and partiality on the part of the State. Such a perception reduces the rural population's trust in public institutions and hinders the construction of strategies to prevent violence.

The UN 2030 Agenda (2015), in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 16, proposes the promotion of peace, justice and effective institutions. This guideline is especially relevant in the Amazonian context, where the institutional deficit and the overlapping of norms aggravate conflicts and increase insecurity. The implementation of coordinated actions

between public security, agrarian policy, justice and civil society is an essential condition for overcoming conflicts.

In view of this, it is urgent that the State of Rondônia develop specific protocols for action in land conflicts, with a focus on prevention and mediation. The continued training of security agents to work in rural areas, the creation of permanent interinstitutional nuclei and the strengthening of territorial governance are priority measures. Without this, public security will continue to be treated as a substitute for land policy, burdened by demands for which it does not have its own institutional framework.

4 THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MILITARY POLICE OF RONDÔNIA (PMRO)

The Military Police of Rondônia (PMRO) has played a central and multifaceted role in the management of land conflicts plaguing the state. Its performance occurs predominantly in moments of acute clashes, particularly in repossession operations, ostensive patrols in rural areas and immediate responses to episodes of violence associated with territorial disputes. This is an essential presence, but marked by structural limitations and a reactive logic that denounces the absence of an integrated public policy to deal with the complexity of the land issue (Costa, 2016; Mesquita, 2011).

The PMRO is often triggered through court orders, ministerial requests or community complaints. However, these actions are carried out without the existence of well-defined inter-institutional flows between the bodies that make up the agrarian justice system. There is no articulated action protocol on the part of the State, which generates isolated actions, often of a coercive nature, without prior mediation. This normative and strategic vacuum compromises the effectiveness of actions and increases the risks of worsening conflicts (Treccani et al., 2020).

The operational reality of the corporation also imposes serious challenges. In several municipalities in the interior, the battalions face a severe shortage of personnel, vehicles in poor condition, absence of adequate communication equipment, in addition to logistical difficulties related to the territorial vastness and precariousness of the rural road network. Responding to occurrences in areas of land litigation requires a large mobilization of resources, extensive displacements and, often, the use of personnel that compromises ordinary urban policing (Bispo et al., 2024).

Another sensitive aspect concerns the absence of adequate doctrinal training for acting in land conflicts. Military police officers are exposed to situations of very high complexity, involving vulnerable populations, traditional communities, indigenous people, and organized social movements. The absence of specific training for dialogue, mediation and

proportional restraint in these circumstances compromises not only the rights of the communities involved, but also the legal certainty of the agents themselves, who become targets of lawsuits for alleged excessive use of force or abuse of authority (Mesquita, 2011; CPT, 2016).

Emblematic cases, such as the episodes recorded in Nova Dimensão (Nova Mamoré) and Buritis, illustrate situations in which the PMRO's actions were the target of complaints to human rights organizations. Even operating under court orders, the corporation was accused of having carried out actions with disproportionate violence, resulting in deaths, injuries and destruction of homes. These situations have exposed the tension between the legality of the orders received and the need to preserve fundamental rights in areas where the State only reaches in the policed form (CPT, 2019; Treccani et al., 2020).

Despite these adversities, there are records of good practices carried out by PMRO units in conjunction with the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Public Defender's Office and social assistance agencies. In operations that adopted pacification methodologies, prior dialogue with communities, and prior vulnerability assessment, a reduction in violence and resistance was observed, in addition to strengthening the positive perception of the police institution (CPT, 2024b). Such practices, however, remain punctual and dependent on the initiative of local commands, and are not institutionalized as a permanent policy of the corporation.

In view of the complexity of land conflicts, it is urgent to institutionalize a doctrine of its own for the Military Police to act in agrarian conflicts. It is necessary to develop state protocols for rural policing sensitive to human rights, with integration with territorial development, mediation and agrarian justice policies. Continuing education, with an interdisciplinary and interinstitutional focus, should be an integral part of the training of operational staff.

Such an approach is in line with the principles of the UN 2030 Agenda (2015), particularly Sustainable Development Goal number 16, which deals with the promotion of peace, justice and effective institutions. The PMRO's performance in land conflicts needs to be reformulated in the light of these commitments, with a view to consolidating its position as a State institution and not as an exclusive instrument for the coercive execution of court orders. The strengthening of territorial governance, humanized police training, and interagency action represents the way to mitigate the impacts of agrarian conflicts on public security and social cohesion in Rondônia.

4.1 TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE AND PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS

Agrarian conflicts in Rondônia reveal the historical absence of effective territorial governance, marked by institutional fragmentation, by the omission of the State and by the adoption of public policies that, instead of preventing, tend to intensify conflicts. Land management in the Amazon has prioritized short-term economic interests to the detriment of social inclusion and environmental justice, which results in a scenario of permanent territorial instability (Becker, 2010; Silva et al., 2020).

In this context, peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms, such as community mediation, have proven to be viable and promising alternatives. Mediation allows dialogue between the parties involved, favors the preservation of social relations and contributes to the construction of consensual solutions. In experiences such as the Margarida Alves Settlement Project, in Rondônia, the role of local associations as mediators was fundamental for the eviction of invaded areas and subsequent land regularization (Oliveira & Bursztyn, 2005).

However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on the articulation between the various entities of the State and civil society. The absence of institutional support for sustainable projects and effective environmental enforcement, added to the connivance with illegal practices such as land grabbing, compromises mediation processes (Rocha, 2022).

Participatory territorial governance, therefore, must be strengthened as a strategy to face conflicts. This requires valuing local knowledge, including traditional populations in the decision-making process, and implementing integrated public policies. According to Azevedo and Pelicioni (2011), the active participation of communities in environmental management processes is an essential condition for sustainability and social pacification.

In addition, legal and institutional instruments, such as public hearings, recommendations from the Public Prosecutor's Office, and regional land mediation commissions, have been progressively adopted in Brazil with good results. In the case of Rondônia, actions by the Public Defender's Office and the Pastoral Land Commission have promoted advances in listening to the impacted populations and in the construction of negotiated solutions to territorial disputes (CPT, 2024b; Rufato, 2019).

Overcoming agrarian conflicts in Rondônia therefore involves the consolidation of democratic, multisectoral and rights-based territorial governance. The promotion of spaces for dialogue, the strengthening of public institutions and the articulation with social movements are essential conditions for land rebalancing and the promotion of peace in the countryside.

5 CONCLUSION

Agrarian conflicts in Rondônia show a scenario of territorial and institutional vulnerability, marked by historical omissions by the State, overlapping land interests and inequality in access to land. The expansion of the Amazonian economic frontier, associated with land grabbing, the advance of agribusiness, and the illegal exploitation of natural resources, has generated social, environmental, and public safety impacts. In this context, security in the countryside has become a central challenge, requiring coordinated action between public institutions and territorial governance mechanisms.

The study confirmed the hypothesis that agrarian conflicts generate serious social and economic losses, in addition to overloading the performance of the Military Police of Rondônia (PMRO), whose presence in the rural territory, although necessary, occurs mostly in a reactive way. The absence of specific protocols, the limitation of resources and the low interinstitutional coordination make it difficult to build sustainable solutions to territorial disputes. The PMRO, although committed to maintaining order, is exposed to a scenario of high social, environmental and legal complexity (Mesquita, 2011; Costa, 2016).

In addition, the research demonstrated that the absence of democratic and integrated territorial governance contributes to the perpetuation of conflicts. The omission of land agencies, the fragile performance of the justice system and the lack of rural development policies compromise the rebalancing of land and the pacification of territories. Although there are local experiences of mediation and negotiation, they remain punctual and insufficient in the face of the magnitude of the problem (Treccani et al., 2020; Oliveira & Bursztyn, 2005).

Based on the findings, it is concluded that overcoming agrarian conflicts in Rondônia requires: (i) the formulation of specific operational protocols for the PMRO, with continuing education focused on mediation and respect for human rights; (ii) the strengthening of the articulation between public security, INCRA, FUNAI, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Public Defender's Office; and (iii) the implementation of public policies for land regularization and participatory territorial governance.

Finally, it is necessary for public security agencies to stop acting in isolation and start integrating strategies for prevention, pacification and territorial inclusion. Confronting conflicts in the countryside is not limited to the use of force, but requires institutional intelligence, commitment to social justice, and innovation in public management. The land crisis in Rondônia is also a crisis of the State, which can only be overcome with cooperation, planning and respect for the constitutional rights of rural populations.

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