

Struggles, Conflicts, and Inequalities among Indigenous Peoples in Brazil

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Abstract This chapter addresses the multidimensional reality of inequality among Brazilian Indigenous peoples, particularly those of the Solimões River in the Amazon. It argues that socioeconomic exclusion is merely one facet of a deeper problem: the continuous economic and cultural denial of effective citizenship. The roots of this permanent social conflict are anchored in an anachronistic power structure – an unresolved colonial legacy whose violence is reproduced in contemporary struggles for land and rights. The analysis reveals the insurmountable chasm between the legal advancements made after the 1988 Constitution and the material reality of these populations. This gap is perpetuated by the reproduction – at varying intensities across different regions of Brazil – of structural deficiencies and systematic violations that cement exclusion and precariousness.

Keywords Inequality. Brazilian Indigenous peoples. Power structures. Effective citizenship. Colonial legacy.

Summary 1 Colonial Legacy. – 2 The Capitalist State and Indigenous Peoples. – 3 Tensions in the Indigenous Amazon. – 4 External Tensions and Conflicts. – 5 Internal Tensions and Conflicts. – 6 Concluding Remarks.



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1 Colonial Legacy

The current inequality faced by Indigenous Peoples, expressed in their economic life, in the absence of effective guarantees of their rights, and in social exclusion, deepens its roots in a colonial legacy that is still waiting to be overcome. In the field of law, the 1988 Brazilian Constitution intended to redress this colonial wound, but in the material conditions of Indigenous Peoples, the conflicts continue to be embodied as a continued repetition of atrocious violence sedimented throughout history.

These relations of domination and violence were fueled by the colonial fiction that forged an 'Other': distant, strange, and threatening, whose different body became the target of corrective disciplining, subject to evangelization, exploitation, and the dispossession of their place in the world. From the European conquest to the independent republics, these bodies - primarily those of women - were violently dragged onto a stage of unequal and cruel struggle, forced to carve out their own paths for escape and mutual protection. This stage of conflict, invariably called "progress", "development", or "capitalist civilization", constitutes a historical arena that only guarantees the destruction of their territories and the erasure of their ways of life. The historical trajectory of Indigenous Peoples, often aimed at dodging predatory pressures and confronting the attacks that deny their existence, has thus been the core of their struggle for rights and for their recognition as plural social and political actors within the contradictory democratic republic.

The colonial project, in this perspective, being incapable of comprehending those culturally different bodies, proceeds to establish relations of erasure and silencing based, primarily, on what Jacques Sémelin (2002, 12) called the "delirious rationality". The adjective "delirious" alludes to two psychiatric phenomena: first, a "psychotic" type of attitude towards the other, who is represented as the incarnation of evil, as a despicable, "backward, primitive" creature, an object of attack, and an instigator - by thinking and being different - of divine fury. The other does not appear as an interlocutor, is not a "peer", their humanity is suppressed. On the other hand, it is also "delirious" because it exposes paranoid behaviors by conceiving the other as a permanent threat, triggering a dangerous death imaginary in which the annihilation of this other would be the guarantee of the omnipotence of the "us" - *bandeirantes*, landowners (*latifundiários*), industrialists, bankers.

By eliminating the other - seen as an enemy, sometimes animalized, other times as inferior or impure - they believe they conquer death. This prejudiced, monologic, and authoritarian matrix of meanings has been the political orientation, and the cognitive misunderstanding,

with which the Brazilian and Latin American elites have related to Indigenous Peoples.

These historical relations based on violence currently translate into serious situations of injustice and affectation of their humanitarian situation. Brazil has over 1,693,535 Indigenous people, which corresponds to 0.83% of the country's total population, distributed across more than 391 different Indigenous peoples and over 295 languages. According to IBGE, there was an increase in the population living in Indigenous Lands (TIs), rising from 567,582 in 2010 to 689,532 in 2022 (IBGE 2025).¹

Despite this remarkable demographic growth, the living conditions of Indigenous Peoples suffer from structural vulnerabilities related to the precariousness of economic life and basic sanitation (water supply, sewage disposal, or garbage disposal), legal insecurity over their territories, and permanent threats from extractive pressures exerted by land grabbers (*grileiros*), ranchers, illegal gold miners (*garimpeiros*), and armed factions that dispute illegal commodity routes within their territories (cocaine, timber, gold, weapons, fish).

The trajectory of Indigenous rights in Brazil, from the Lusitanian conquest to the present day in the Republic, is inextricably linked to the economic and political disputes of a colonial project of exploitation. As historical events attest, this project of power not only determined the violence against these peoples but also participated in the formation of the legal framework that supposedly protects them. Thus, the history of these rights reveals a secular struggle for the implementation of full citizenship. Indigenous struggles, in this perspective, play a decisive role: that of forging the consciousness of a nation founded on ethnic diversity and the recognition of difference. If we examine the colonial legal framework, it is evident that from the initial Portuguese legislation through the first Brazilian laws, the original Indigenous rights to their lands and territories were always acknowledged or recognized (Da Cunha 1987, 11). The historical continuity that all current original peoples are the survivors and heirs of the first occupants of Brazil is unquestionable (12).

In this historical-legislative perspective, it is worth highlighting that the mobilization of Indigenous Peoples was decisive for the historical transformation enshrined in the new Constitution (1988), marking a definitive break with assimilationist paradigms and initiating a new chapter in the recognition of their rights. The Political Constitution not only guaranteed the original right to the lands they traditionally occupy but also unequivocally affirmed the importance of ethnic and cultural diversity in environmental

¹ In: <https://censo2022.ibge.gov.br/panorama/indicadores.html?localidade=e=BR&tema=4>.

policies and territorial security policies, thus configuring the legal mandate for state institutions and security agencies to assume the responsibility of safeguarding their dignity and rights. The current Constitution enshrines Indigenous autonomy, not only overcoming the model of protective tutelage but also recognizing Indigenous Peoples' status as culturally different subjects with full capacity for political-administrative action. This achievement is the result of a long journey of collective struggles that have redefined the place of Indigenous Peoples in the construction of a society that is plural, democratic, and, consequently, in permanent conflict.

One of the explicit evidences of how Indigenous sectors participate in the construction of a multicultural state structure and guarantor of rights has been their achievements and actions in the public sphere, amplifying their own voices and also increasingly occupying spaces of political and institutional representation. For example, by October 6, 2024, an 8% increase in Indigenous representation in elections was registered, reaching over 256 electoral positions, compared to the 236 elected in 2020 (Mendes 2024). Likewise, for the first time in the history of the Republic, a Ministry of Indigenous Peoples was created, headed by the leader Sônia Guajajara, who was appointed in 2023, and also, for the first time, the presidency of FUNAI (National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples) is in the hands of an Indigenous lawyer, Joênia Wapichana, who is currently in office.

From this point of view, it is expected that the unprecedented achievements in Indigenous representation can operationalize the normative frameworks that support them, translating them from the letter of the law to concrete reality. The permanent challenge, however, is to overcome the "constitutional illusion" and demand that institutions fulfill their responsibilities regarding chronic problems: exclusion, the violation of rights, violence, and a scenario of humanitarian insecurity that is historically reproduced. The current moment offers unique opportunities to consolidate institutional competences, strengthen mechanisms for protecting Indigenous rights, and define public policies of shared responsibilities that safeguard their dignity.

2 The Capitalist State and Indigenous Peoples

The achievement of Indigenous rights has not been sufficient to curb territorial conflicts, which persist as symptoms of capitalist pressure on their territories. This reality highlights the shackles of the rentier State, a captive of a profit logic that benefits specific sectors - such as agribusiness, mega-projects (*mega obras*), and the trade of legal and illegal raw materials. This is the essence of the agro-export and extractivist model that predominates in Latin America: an

economic policy that consolidates the power of the business class and large landowners (*latifúndio*), who control rural businesses under a logic of intensive accumulation (Katz 2014), restricting economic distribution. This power of commercial profit, in turn, converts into political power, with these sectors occupying key positions in the State to shape power structures in their favor.

The activities of exploiting raw materials and natural resources bring with them processes of environmental degradation and extermination which, in turn, are accompanied by the action of armed forces that perpetrate violence against Indigenous people and defenders of territorial and environmental rights. This is the warning raised by Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in her September 2018 report. The rapporteur denounces that Brazil, along with Colombia, Mexico, and the Philippines, accounts for 80% of global deaths of Indigenous rights defenders. And of the 312 human rights defenders murdered in 2017, 67% were Indigenous people fighting to defend their territories and rights, almost always against private sector extractivist projects. In recent years, as warned by the report *Violence Against Indigenous Peoples in Brazil - 2024*, Indigenous Peoples

sought to guarantee, through occupations and reclamations (*retomadas*), a minimum vital space for subsistence in their own territories, amidst a scenario of despair regarding the advancement of demarcations. In retaliation, they suffered violent attacks: 154 cases of territorial rights conflicts; 230 cases of omission and slowness in land regularization; 857 cases of possessory invasions, illegal resource exploitation, and damage to property; and more than 211 murders. (CIMI 2024)

At the same time, cases of rape and sexual abuse of women and girls are also increasing, showing that, despite social debates and mobilizations, sexism and intolerance are intensifying at an alarming rate - both within communities and in society as a whole (CIMI 2024, 24).

In 2022, the CIMI report *Violence against Indigenous Peoples in Brazil* recorded 309 cases of invasions and illegal exploitation of resources in Indigenous Lands and 180 murders of Indigenous people. The number of cases of violence against these populations increased considerably during the years of the Bolsonaro administration (2019-23). In 2018, 109 such cases were registered. During the first three years of the Bolsonaro administration, for example, the increases in attacks and invasions against Indigenous territories were notorious, conflicts that were reflected in the institutional environment of offensive against the constitutional rights of original peoples. As indigenous lawyer Marcela Lacerda Macuxi rightly warns, evidence from a study by the UFPR and the Ministry of Indigenous

Peoples confirms that violence against indigenous women grew by 500% between 2003 and 2022. The victims are mostly young, single, and have low levels of formal education. Lack of legal awareness and linguistic barriers emerge as key factors in the underreporting of these crimes (Macuxi 2025).

This is attested to by proposals such as Bill (PL) 490/2007, which sought to render new demarcations unviable and open already demarcated lands to predatory exploitation, and Bill 191/2020, authored by the federal government under the command of Bolsonaro, which proposed to liberalize mining in Indigenous Lands. This set of actions allowed invaders to advance their illegal activities in the territories of Indigenous Peoples. Recently, in early 2023, with the end of the Bolsonaro mandate and the start of the new government, the world witnessed the situation of starvation and destruction in Yanomami territories, through impactful images that circulated in the main international media outlets.

The Bolsonaro administration was guided by an agenda of aggressive agribusiness expansion - based on extensive livestock farming and monocultures such as soybeans, sugarcane, and palm - which promoted the invasion of territories previously designated for land reform and fostered the devastation of ecosystems through burning (*queimadas*). This offensive served a clear project of economic exploitation of areas with already mapped mineral deposits for future extraction. Concurrently, it promoted the systematic dismantling of environmental institutions, with the massive appointment of military personnel to key positions in inspection agencies - surpassing, remarkably, the numbers of the military dictatorship. This political co-optation (*aparelhamento*) directly affected critical institutions, such as the Public Prosecutor's Offices in the Amazon border regions and the agencies responsible for environmental control in Indigenous Lands and conservation units, resulting in severe setbacks in socio-environmental rights and protections.

Despite a context marked by high rates of violence, socioeconomic inequality, the persistence of illegal economies, and institutional corruption - a scenario deepened by the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and social protection systems - Indigenous mobilizations and social movements managed to insert their agendas into the center of the debate of the recently elected governments.

In this perspective, we want to highlight that, in Brazil and Latin America, facing the deep political crises and processes of dispossession, expropriation, and the precariousness of life, various Indigenous collectives and organizations, organized popular sectors, and social minorities are initiating processes of building political ties and articulated relationships, forming vital spaces for political experimentation (Acampamento Terra Livre, Articulação dos Povos

Indígenas do Brasil (APIB); Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira (COIAB)), which re-sensitize the social field and propose pathways for common existence.

3 Tensions in the Indigenous Amazon

The Amazon is today the stage for central conflicts on international political agendas. Beyond housing the world's greatest Indigenous cultural and environmental diversity, the region has consolidated itself as a nerve center of environmental politics on the global geopolitical chessboard.

Since the intervention of the rubber slavery regime (1880-1932), the Amazon has always been exposed to fierce predatory forces. Those who suffered the violence of this intervention were the human beings who inhabit the forests and rivers in a non-destructive way: Indigenous peoples, caboclos, riverine populations (*ribeirinhos*), and peasants. The region thus appears, in the prejudiced eyes of the elites, as the last frontier to be conquered, an available reserve – as if it belonged to them – for deepening the “original accumulation” upon forests that harbor large mineral deposits that have been mapped for years and included in future exploration phases. Moreover, in the minds of businessmen in major Latin American cities, when the Amazon is not an uninhabited landscape, it is a prosperous land where germinate those beings considered “obstacles to progress, hindrances to development”: forbidden characters, incomprehensible chants, savage Indians, cannibal creatures, guerrillas, outsiders of the market and bureaucracy, a place of godless fugitives, a territory where, in the eyes of the State, the nation's nightmares sprout. From this perspective, this territory deserves to be civilized, sold, Christianized, and statized with the arms of the homeland.

It is difficult for the hegemonic society to impose itself completely in the equatorial jungles and frontiers of America. In these territories, it is forced to continually dispute the consent and obedience that its power enjoys in other spheres of national life. In the Amazonian rivers, state political plans are constantly challenged by diverse actors who attempt to build their own social order, which, while not free from conflicts and injustices, is considered an illegal and threatening disorder simply because it contests the dominant instructions.

This entire process of extractive, racist, and predatory intervention, as stated, dates back to the bloody rubber era and has not stopped. Even during the Workers' Party (PT) governments (Lula 2003-11, Dilma 2011-16), there were no direct policies to reverse the forces of economic exploitation over the Amazon; deforestation was not contained. The Dilma governments (2011-16) were the ones that demarcated the fewest Indigenous lands and even initiated the

construction of the intrusive and catastrophic mega-project of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Plant in the Xingu River basin, a clear example of “internal colonialism” that destroyed the lives of the Indigenous Peoples Kayapó, Arara, Arareute, Apidereula, Juruna, and Maracanã. As journalist Eliane Brum has insisted, following the construction of Belo Monte places us before the anatomy of ethnocide. This happened precisely because the PT governments, even with their concern for basic rights and the reforms that improved the lives of millions of Brazilians, acted as administrators of capital, assuming bureaucratic and political pacts with their secular class antagonists.

The PT, it should be emphasized, never managed to escape the structural ills of the rentier State, which serves a peripheral, dependent capitalism marked by its primary extractive-export function in the global accumulation system. That is, dependence and delays determining the course of the country’s political-economic history. The PT’s political project was not transformative; it was an amplifier of the consumption model, and it accentuated commodification – that is, the subjection of life to the imperatives of capital. With Bolsonaro, extractive actions reached alarming levels, exacerbating conflicts, hence his perverse campaign declaration that he would “not demarcate one more centimeter of Indigenous lands”. The Indigenous leader Ailton Krenak had already warned: “there was no discovery; it is a continuous invasion, and the State has been and is the main mobilizer of this invasion – the entire apparatus of the State with its agencies”.

One only needs to look at the statistics to get an idea, not of the threats, but of the irreversible disasters: Brazil is an Amazonian country (49% of its territory is the Amazon) and, up to 2010, had deforested more than 763,000 km² (an area equivalent to 184 million soccer fields and three states of São Paulo) (Nobre 2014, 5). Consequently, as recently warned by professors Thomas Lovejoy and Carlos Nobre in the Science Advance editorial (Lovejoy, Nobre 2018), “the Amazonian system is close to reaching its tipping point”. This means that the Amazon ecosystem, responsible for producing half of the rainfall, could alter its hydrological cycle if it reaches 40% deforestation.

The most aggressive droughts of 2005, 2010, and between 2015 and 2016 constitute the first indications of the approach to such a point of no return. Currently, the deforested area of the greater Amazon region reaches about 20%, a reality that is aggravated by the degrading factors of the smoke plumes from the burning of cleared forest for agricultural activity during dry periods and global climate change, a combination sufficient for the “tipping point” to be determined at 20-25% of the deforested area. In 2024, one hundred years after the atrocities of the rubber slavery, an inopportune arrival of the drought was registered, usually expected between August and

September and not in July as happened this year. All cartography, across various themes, geographical facts, and sociodemographic cross-referencing, shows the Amazon marked by reddish circles, resembling diseased lesions (or festering wounds) that affect all the elements (or bodies) that compose it. These processes of degradation and environmental extermination are accompanied by the action of the armed forces, which exert violence against Indigenous people and defenders of territorial and environmental rights.

Focusing on the conflicts experienced by Indigenous people - particularly the Magüta (Tikuna), Kambeba, and Cocama peoples on the Brazil-Colombia border - we confirm the warnings of the *Cartographies of Violence in the Amazon* report (FBSP 2023). This document highlights that the Amazon region is one of the most violent in Brazil, serving as a stage for conflicts, disputes over illegal markets, violence against women, and the ongoing intervention of economic and political forces over diverse Indigenous territories and ways of life. The structure of exclusion and sexist violence against women, for instance, constitutes a severe situation of gender exclusion that must be addressed and mitigated through urgent public policies. What has been evidenced by different studies, diagnoses, and reports² is that the municipalities that make up this region have experienced high indices of social vulnerability, economic informality, and human rights violation, with very high rates of unsatisfied basic needs (0.499) and extremely high inequality (above 0.55) (Cortés Carvajal et al. 2020), being marked by the presence of fragile public institutions, with security agencies facing limitations in concrete geographic operations that allow for the effective resolution of common population problems (Cortés, Carvajal et al. 2020).

According to data from the 2022 Demographic Census, the absence of adequate public policies for the Amazonian region, especially concerning Indigenous and riverine populations, can be confirmed once again, facts that directly impact the local demographic dynamics. The lack of investment in infrastructure, education, health, and basic sanitation leads to a rural exodus, with young people migrating to urban centers in search of better life opportunities.

The consequences of the absence of public policies are: 1.) Aging of the rural population: With the departure of the youth, the rural population ages, which can compromise the transmission of knowledge and food autonomy; 2.) Environmental degradation: The search for alternative sources of income, such as the illegal exploitation of natural resources, can accelerate environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity; 3.) Increase in violence: The violent dispute over

2 In: Rapozo, Silva 2020; Carvajal Cortes et al. 2020; Instituto Igarapé 2022; Sérgio de Lima 2022; Santos, Parreira, Hoff da Cunha 2024.

illegal commodities and natural resources, the lack of opportunities, and the presence of organized crime contribute to the rise in violence rates in rural communities; 4.) Weakening of cultural practices: The loss of territory, the change in consumption patterns, and the influence of external cultures can lead to the weakening of cultural life (Do Carmo 2024).

It is important to highlight that in the Amazonian border regions, as Carlos Zárata (2017) rightly warns, the violent dynamics have a historical relationship with the development of the policies of the Brazilian, Colombian, and Peruvian national States, as well as their policies and forces for the exploitation of nature, often accompanied by militarization plans for these international areas. Regarding border policies, in geopolitical and social relations terms, it must be considered that the international limits of Brazil, Colombia, and Peru are still treated primarily as a military matter, defining a conception of the border that disregards the network of inter-ethnic, economic, and cultural ties and relationships. This conception privileges, above all, a military approach to the defense of national sovereignty and the fight against illegal economies, drug trafficking, illegal mining (*garimpo*), timber exploitation, and the combat of criminal factions (Raposo, Silva 2020, 76).

To understand the nature of the conflicts and violence affecting the Magüta, Kameba, and Cocama Peoples of the Upper Solimões River, on the border between Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, with greater clarity, it is essential to transcend the limited perspective of national borders. The problems faced by these communities are not restricted to the framework of the nation-state but manifest themselves in a cross-border manner, affecting lives and territories beyond political divisions. Overcoming what Ulrich Beck (2005) called “methodological nationalism” allows us to un-blur the restricted vision of local economic and geopolitical dynamics. In this way, it is possible to clearly see phenomena such as the trafficking of illicit drugs and associated criminality, which are violently and detrimentally imposed upon the Amazonian Indigenous Peoples.

From this perspective, it is possible to categorize the afflictions and problems that violate Indigenous rights into two interconnected fields, each involving specific experiences, risks, and concerns:

External tensions and conflicts, which transcend the autonomous control of Indigenous organizations and demand the intervention of security agencies and state institutions for their resolution; and Internal tensions and conflicts, which can be addressed through community work, with the protagonism of local authorities and organizations. However, this does not waive the need for support and backing from other actors, such as institutions, universities, and strategic allies, who play a crucial role in the defense and promotion of Indigenous rights.

Both fields require complementary approaches, recognizing the complexity and interdependence of the challenges faced by these communities.

4 External Tensions and Conflicts

4.1 Narcotrafficking and Violence

According to reports from the Indigenous inhabitants of the Upper Solimões River region themselves, corroborated by other studies (Cdesc, Senad/MJSP 2023, PNUD, UNODC) and diagnostics from the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety (FBSP 2023), it becomes evident that the activities of processing, transporting, and trafficking of illicit drugs in Indigenous territories represent a grave humanitarian problem. This reality is not limited to episodes of violence resulting from disputes between criminal factions for control of the illegal market; it also includes invasions of Indigenous lands, the violent dominion of rivers as transport routes, the coercive recruitment of youth, and their exposure to drug consumption.

The core of this problem lies in the actions, both legal and illegal, violent and non-violent, of organized crime as an economic enterprise and geopolitical control in the Legal Amazon, primarily between the two main criminal groups in Brazil: the First Command of the Capital (PCC) and the Red Command (CV). However, beyond these, there is an “ecology of logistical relationships” among various regional illegal groups. This involves a set of coordinated activities executed under the command of a hierarchy or leadership that, through the use of coercion, guarantees the flow of illicit markets. These activities range from the hiring and execution of services – such as transport, surveillance, provision of cover and hideouts – to the bribing of authorities, thereby ensuring the continuous operation of the illegal business through regionally distributed tasks.

In this scenario of violent disputes for control of the cocaine business, as is predictable, the rates of violence and crime have increased. This violence by criminal groups in the dispute over illegal markets, which manifests in different intensities at the local and state levels, alarmingly threatens the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Just to get an idea of the landscape of violence in the Legal Amazon, and as warned by the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety (FBSP 2023):

In 2022, more than 8,000 people were victims of intentional lethal violent crimes—a category that includes deliberate homicides, armed robberies resulting in death (*latrocínios*), and bodily injuries followed by death—in the region. At the regional level,

the death rate per 100,000 inhabitants was 26.7 in the states of the Legal Amazon, while in the other states the index was 17.7. That is, the intentional lethal violence rate in the Legal Amazon is 50.8% higher than the rate in the other Federative Units (FUs). In Brazil, the average murder rate was 19 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2022. Among the states that compose the Legal Amazon, Amazonas presented the highest rate of intentional lethal violent crimes in 2022: 33.1 per 100,000 inhabitants, totaling 1,432 murders during the year. [...] The rate of deaths caused by police is also higher in the Legal Amazon region compared to the rest of the country. In 2021, 1,057 people were killed by military and civil police in the region, a rate of 3.6 per 100,000 inhabitants. In the remaining Brazilian states, the rate was 2.8 per 100,000. Between 2018 and 2021, while deaths by police grew 5.1% in the Amazon states, there was a 4.2% reduction in the rest of the states. (FBSP 2023, 5)

It must not be overlooked that the circumstances of violence are linked to a permanent situation of socioeconomic inequality and precariousness that primarily affects Indigenous Peoples. In this region, the State is the main contractor and job generator, often concentrated in the military field and the basic bureaucratic structure, with a restricted domestic market for legal businesses and scarce employment, which makes it a region of difficult access where illicit activities thrive (Crisis Group América Latina 2024, 2).

4.2 Environmental Crimes

As has been widely documented and warned by Indigenous Peoples themselves, the Amazonian border region also features a concentration of land conflicts stemming from the invasion of Indigenous Lands and land grabbing (*grilagem*) of public lands, as well as environmental crimes due to illegal logging and mining (*garimpo*), in addition to biopiracy and predatory fishing (FBSP - Cartographies of Violence in the Amazon 2023, 51). Many of these extractive intervention actions are driven by narcotrafficking bosses or people directly involved with the illegal cocaine trade and money laundering (Rapozo; Conceição da Silva; Carvalho Coutinho 2024, 31).

As demonstrated by the Amazon Geo-Referenced Socio-Environmental Information Network (RAISG) (2019), there is an evident and directly proportional relationship across the entire Amazon between cattle ranching activity and deforestation. This is, in turn, confirmed by INPE studies, which registered a deforestation rate of 10,851 km² in 2020. This rate showed an increase to 13,038 km² in 2021, representing a 20.15% increase in the deforested area rate (FBSP - Cartographies of Violence in the Amazon 2023,

95). This increase is mainly linked to the opening of pastures, timber commercialization, and monoculture cultivation, reaching a cumulative total of 481,869 km², which corresponds to 10% of the Legal Amazon's territory. However, in 2022, a reduction in this rate was registered to 11,594 km², a fact that had not occurred since 2017 (FBSP - Cartographies of Violence in the Amazon 2023, 95).

The Upper Solimões River on the border is today a contested territory. This dispute is dual: on one side, a predatory pillaging that treats the region as a reserve to be looted through illegal extraction, cattle ranching, and monocultures. On the other, its consolidation as a logistical network for criminal enterprises, involving narcotrafficking, arms trafficking, and illegal mining that enslaves Indigenous people. Merging these two fronts is a prevailing conception of the forest as a great mineral deposit, a long-standing project that completely ignores the environmental agenda.

In this scenario of complex conditions involving the violation of rights, the presence of criminal group actions, and the reproduction of forms of violence, a critical situation is exposed - as Indigenous authorities and community guards have well warned - where social, economic, political, and environmental conflicts converge and intertwine.

5 Internal Tensions and Conflicts

Internal conflicts among Indigenous Peoples are intensified by an external context of violence, inequality, and precariousness. This perverse dynamic generates a self-destructive cycle: the violence of invaders and criminal factions disaggregates social relations, undermining community cohesion and trust. With social ties weakened, criminality emerges as a tangible option, recruiting vulnerable Indigenous youth not only as labor but also as new consumers for the drug market.

The multidimensionality of Indigenous inequality - expressed in structural deficiencies, exclusion, and the denial of effective citizenship - constitutes the fertile ground where internal conflicts proliferate. In this context of vulnerability, a phenomenon reported with growing alarm in the Solimões River region is the invasion of evangelical churches. Such groups, far from exerting a mere religious influence, abusively interfere with community autonomy, operating a moral control that stigmatizes traditional practices and weakens the Indigenous social fabric.

6 Concluding Remarks

As stated, the effective absence of rights and the severe lack of public security and territorial protection render the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, and primarily those of the Upper Solimões in the Amazon, vulnerable to the actions of organized crime. The factions that dispute control of the illegal border markets profoundly impact the ways of life and the social organization of these populations.

Consequently, it is essential to propose recommendations and solutions that can guide the actions of state institutions responsible for public policies and security agencies. One of the main recommendations, raised by Indigenous inhabitants in the Amazon, in addition to the demarcation of Indigenous territories, is the regulation of public security policies in Indigenous border territories. Another relevant aspect is to recognize and support Indigenous collective initiatives for mutual protection, such as community security guards, which are forms of collective action that require official regulation.

As the Amazonian Indigenous Peoples themselves have warned, and as local experiences in territory defense have shown, including the recommendations of the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety (2023), a governance model that can truly guarantee public security in the Amazon must rely on the participation and protagonism of Indigenous Peoples, including their Indigenous guards, as direct knowledge holders of the violence and conflicts suffered (2023, 51).

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