

Public security: present and future

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THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS ESSAY is to respond to three questions: 1. What are the most serious national problems in the field of public security? 2. What needs to be done to resolve or minimize them? – i.e., in order to have a future distinguished by more safety, what can be said with respect to constitutional rights? 3. In the event the public policies considered here are not implemented, what would be the consequences? – in other words, in that case, what future can we expect in terms of safety and the broader effects of the deterioration, above all, in the realm of urban sociability and democratic institutions?

Notice that remaining outside the scope of the present essay are questions of immense importance such as criminal policy within the bounds of its legality, the prison system, the socio-educational system, the Public Ministry and the Ministry of Justice, that are intertwined within the field of institutional safety. For strictly practical reasons, given the limited space available, we can't discuss non-criminal forms of violence even if they would be extremely relevant. Neither will broader theoretical questions be considered here that are related to the concept of crime and violence, to the registration of violence in the State and in social structures, and the vicious processes of criminalization that are at both the root and margins of Brazilian inequality.

It should be pointed out that lack of public safety is, today, a national tragedy that reaches collective society and has provoked a true genocide of youth, most of all poor and black males. Lethal criminality reaches Dantesque levels, in addition to, turning to a political problem, suffocating freedom and the basic rights of hundreds of poor communities.

The principal matrices of criminality

The matrices of criminality are diverse and their manifestations vary in conformity to regions and states of the country, as already has been said. This should be reiterated: Brazil is so diverse that no generalization can be sustained. Its multiplicity also makes it resistant to singular one-size solutions. Brazilian society, in its complexity, allows neither simplifications nor strait-jackets. Examples of the diversity: in some regions, a majority of malicious homicides are the result of interpersonal conflicts, whose outcome would be less serious had it not been for the availability of firearms. In Espírito Santo

and in the Northeast, murder for hire is still common, feeding the death industry, whose business involves professional gunmen who act individually or meet in “extermination groups,” frequently with police participation. While “organized crime” prospers, the death merchants tend to be coopted by the clandestine networks that penetrate public institutions, connecting themselves to political and economic special interests, to which money laundering is never alien, the principal intermediary of the dynamics that make possible as well as produce corruption and many illicit practices that are even more lucrative.

There are significant criminal investments in car and trucking robbery and thefts, both of which are modes requiring stringent interactivity with structures for receipt, whether for resale, dismantling or financial recovery. And there is a plague that corrodes confidence and propagates fear in the cities: assaults, in the neighborhoods and, above all in the center of cities, from which no one is free, but which with greatest frequency and cowardice affects the elderly.

Robberies of banks, residences and buses, as well as kidnappings, particularly the type known as “lightning-bolt kidnappings,” have become common and dangerous throughout the country because of the availability of guns and their use, these crimes that, by definition, aim exclusively at monetary assets, have with frightening frequency been converted into crimes against life itself— an expansion to “robbery followed by death,” - armed robberies constitute a sad portrait of this tendency.

In the country as a whole, even having a combination of criminal matrices, articulating and feeding diverse dynamics, it has been recognized that it has been arms and drug trafficking which increasingly top all other criminal modes, to which those dynamics have become subordinate, strengthening them and providing benefits.

There is still time to avoid a repetition in other states of the tragedies that became commonplace in Rio de Janeiro, but it is imperative to recognize that there are already strong indications that drug traffic is the most dangerous and insidious matrix that grows most swiftly, installing itself in the villas, slums and peripheries of cities and adopts the territorial dominion and as a pattern threatens communities, that is the matrix most apt to recruit vulnerable youth and reproduce itself, stimulated by social crisis and by the fragility of self-esteem.

This criminal matrix has assumed a peculiar characteristic by infiltrating and disseminating itself as a cultural style and economic way of life, with its unique and lamentable marketplace of promises.

Investigative police work is required, however, to fight the wholesale networks, visible police actions to restrain retail sales, but above all, the requirement of well-coordinated, territorially circumscribed preventive social intervention synchronized to the multi-dimensionality of the problems involved.

Effectively, arms and drug traffic is the criminal dynamic that most grows in Brazilian metropolitan regions, more organically interpenetrating the organized crime network, has more influence over the matrix of criminality and is more extensive throughout the country. Drugs finance arms and these intensify the violence associated with criminal activities and expand their number and their modes.

This perverse marriage was celebrated in the middle of the 1980s most of all in Rio de Janeiro and in São Paulo even before there had been linkages between the two.

Domestic violence, specifically gender-based violence victimizing women, just as with more diverse forms of aggression against children, has been revealed throughout the country as more intense and constant as increased knowledge about it emerges. Most surprising of the data regarding aggression: in more than 60% of the cases observed, in studies and in diverse surveys performed in the country, the violent perpetrator is known by the victim –relative, husband, ex-husband, lover, father, step-father etc. This means that this matrix of violence, in spite of deserving urgent attention and constituting a problem of great seriousness for those who suffer or witness it, whether for their present circumstances, whether for its future effect (studies show that those who are subjected to violence, in childhood, or witnessed it, have greater likelihood of becoming involved with practical violence much later), is not enacted by professional criminals or perpetrators who are career criminals.

This aspect implies a problematic delineation, from which the need for specific policy implementation derives, which should not be confused with mere repression or a simple police action – even when that would obviously also be necessary. The same can be said about homophobic and racist violence. Both require specific policies, the limits of neither being exhausted by acts of repression and for both of which are involved the inclusion of practical and cultural reeducation of the safety professionals themselves.

About causes

Explanations for violence and crime are not easy. Above all it is necessary to avoid the trap of generalization. Crime doesn't exist in the singular. There is an immense diversity of criminal practices associated with many different social dynamics. Because of this it makes no sense to imagine that it would be possible to identify only one cause for the heterogeneous universe of criminality.

Street corner robberies that are committed by poor glue sniffing boys who live on the streets who are left to their own devices, without access to education and the love of a family that respects them, are obvious within this cruel context. It is clear that these crimes are inseparable from this social picture. The same goes for retail drug dealing in the peripheral areas: idle young people without hope are easy prey for the merchants of underground

drug commerce. It is not difficult to recruit a veritable army of youth when the economic advantages offered and the symbolic benefits that enhance self-esteem and represent power to the excluded are so much superior to the fluctuating alternatives of the labor market.

On the other hand, the arms dealers who are wholesalers, laundering money on the international financial market, are not children of poverty or inequality. Their dealings are stimulated by impunity.

In other words, poverty and inequality both are and are not the only conditioners of criminality, depending on the kind of crime the intersubjective context and the cultural horizon to which we are referring. This complex picture requires policies sensitive to the various dimensions that are comprised. It is time to retire unilateral visions and voluntarism.

How can criminal violence be reduced?

There are two complementary ways of working to promote public security: through preventive policies and, in the case of the States, police action or the Civil Guard in municipal districts, – the federal government can act not only by means of federal police and the federal highway patrol, but by inducement by the application of a national policy that provides a means of effecting inter-institutional cooperation, and in order to impose minimal quality requirements for providing public security services that are efficient and respect laws and human rights.

We will address ourselves now to the matter of the prevention of violent criminality, and begin with a presentation of some presuppositions and some implications.

Policies of violent crime prevention can produce effects rapidly, at low cost (with reference here to the municipalities and their governments since, by their proximity “to the point,” accessibility, agility and leanness constitute the greatest likelihood of executing preventive policies).

Policies intended to prevent criminal violence are not long-term structural policies destined to act on the socio-economic macrostructure of the country. Generally the contrary supposition provokes equivocations, misunderstandings and difficulties of every sort.

In the first place, because immobility is induced: “without elimination of the great structural inequities of Brazilian society, nothing can be done to compensate for the lack of security,” say those whose skepticism is based on the conviction that either everything must be done or nothing can be done; or, unless the deep and permanent causes are altered, we are condemned to a smokescreen of dry ice.

In the second place, such a conviction, to the extent that it denies the possibility of short term solutions, instills disbelief, frustration and desperation in the population –, these feelings being serious risk factors in themselves and rich fertilizer for proposals of an authoritarian nature such as: surround the

slums, arm the population, build higher walls, exchange public security for private solutions, stimulate the brutal and arbitrary practice of “mob rule,” support police brutality, enact the death penalty, reducing the age of penal immunity, etc.), all of which end by feeding the vicious circle of violence.

On the contrary, the best national and international experience demonstrates with a profusion of examples and arguments the possibility of combining public actions of a preventive nature with prompt results, presupposing the possibility that prevention policies are rather efficient even if they do not act on structural causes or intervene in macrostructure.

In other words, there is a means of acting efficiently on those dynamics generating phenomena that we either want to avoid or restrain, within a short space of time, that only requires mobilizing limited resources. Repression does not have to monopolize the response that is required by a need for urgency and promptness, besides not always being efficient. Prevention can be agile, quick, cheap and even more efficient.

It may frequently be thought that preventive policies not aiming for structural changes are superficial and fail to prevent return of the problem they are intended to solve. But although this is true, they can nonetheless save lives, reduce harm and suffering, and make life more felicitous. When this occurs, preventive policies that initiate standards of behavior, rouse feelings and activate collective perceptions are themselves converted into situational contexts that are less vulnerable to the pressures of various criminal factors. I.e., symptoms can kill the patient and should be treated, even when the patient is not ready for the surgery. Even if only because, without treatment, surgery will not be possible.

In public security, consequences turn into causes in the subsequent progression of the social process: specific conditions favor criminal activities; crimes push out businesses, which increases unemployment, expanding the conditions for the growth of certain kinds of criminality etc. And the cycle takes another turn around the same axle.

The contrary is also true: reducing criminality and the intensity of applied violence, settling businesses attracts others, increasing employment opportunities, enabling sanitary and urban conditions to evolve, and thus successively aids in the establishment of a “virtuous circle.”

From this point of view, it may be concluded that to act on the immediate causes of crime topically and superficially, reducing the number of victims, the rate of risk, the degree of propagation of fear, and the sense of insecurity, ends up being much more than the smoke of dry ice, even if the agenda actions do not reach the structural center of the problems.

Crime begets crime, through economic intervention as well as through other spheres of social life. By acting on crime, this self-feeding dynamic is interrupted because in a positive manner it affects the concatenation of factors that function as mediate and immediate causes of crime. Less crime is

equivalent to a better economy, better quality of life and as a consequence less crime results.

This rationale is seated in today's widely accepted presupposition, that crime is as much the cause of social and economic crisis as its reflection.

However, and curiously, acting against crime *is* intervening in its causes. In this sense the distinction between structural prevention and topical policies becomes irrelevant, at least to the extent that both intercept dynamics that are contributing to the generation of phenomena that are to be avoided. In other words, both are important and have their place. And therefore the sacrifice of topical policies in the name of the supposed superiority (or, even worse, exclusivity) of structural policies is not justified.

Efficient preventive policies depend on local diagnoses (technical and interactive), participative management, territorial delineation, political authority and intersectorial integration.

Local diagnoses

There are no single or general models that are applicable to all cities in the entire country. But there are general conditions that should be observed, so that a higher level of efficiency can be reached. The first of these, precisely, is to be cautious with generalizations. The quality of a policy depends on the consistency of each program, each project and each action. And this consistency in turn depends on knowledge of each neighborhood, region, square or street of the city.

Whatever the local diagnosis yields concerning the criminal dynamic, a recognition of the multiplicity of dimensions involved will always be essential: from economics to health, and family structure to schools, from the urban scenario to availability of transportation, from living conditions to leisure access, from job opportunities to community relations, from the predominant psychological profile in each typical situation, to the cultural potential present in our musical styles - the aesthetics of youth. None of this should be examined only from a generic and abstract perspective but very concretely according to the specific manifestations of the territory in question – and from those who live there.

Political intersectoriality

The picture that results from the diagnosis will in each case exhibit a vast plurality of dimensions, with those that are the most relevant differing in each case from other contexts.

Thus just as the contexts and the local circumstances vary; so do the realities of the more than fifty five hundred Brazilian municipal districts. Since plurality is a constant, the diagnostic object will always be complex. If the problem of violent criminality is necessarily multidimensional, the appropriate approach to this complexity is to elaborate policies adequate to the complexity,

i.e., sensitive to pluri-dimensionality. In other words, the complexity of the problem requires intersectorial politics, capable of taking into account the various dimensions that comprise criminal violence. Policies that are attuned to the multidimensionality of the phenomena are multi-sectorial or intersectorial.

Reform of governmental structure: integration and political authority

New approach, new policies, by nature intersectorial: without a public agent capable of their implementation. It is thus necessary to create a new area for public management. A political agent that is provided authority with the competence for integration of the various administrative areas. Today, the municipal governments offer segmented organization, divided into departments and intertwined entities. Each department is responsible for a governmental sector and each governmental sector corresponds to one area of social life. Integration, when it exists – which is rare –, depends in general on a supplementary effort, whether volunteer and sporadic, even if the effort perpetually rests on precarious bases. For example, it depends on the implementation of a forum of social policies.

What frequently occurs is that the heads of the departments attend no more than the inaugural meeting of the forum in order to show the mayor and the voters their commitment to the spirit of integrational orientation that the mayor has expressed but quickly forgotten. Representatives of those department heads are then sent to the subsequent meetings, with authority that is only delegated, thus turning a deliberative forum into a consulting council – thereby condemning it to inefficiency and frequently converting it into a space for political dispute.

Instead of solving the problem of integration, these forums or councils end up increasing the difficulties. Too often, after their implementation, the mayor has moved on to another problem. As incredible as it seems, after the effort of integration by means of the forum, the governor then sees before himself the need to create a further mechanism for more integration of this entity, the forum, to add to the government. And the departments remain separated, distant from one another.

If the mayor doesn't awaken to the deceptiveness of this path, an integrating forum of the "integrating forum" will be created for the departments and, later, an integrating forum of the integrating forums. This winds up being amusing, because it presents a caricature of the process, but there are in fact situations that approach the absurd.

Constructing a new public agency requires a more profound and organic reform of the structure of the municipal government. One possible solution – which does not exclude even more radical ones – is the creation of a few executive groups that would be responsible for implementing the government plan, which can regularly report to the mayor and the people.

Based on definition of goals and by identification of priorities, a realistically set timetable and a guarantee of the necessary resources, the executive group can subordinate sectorial politics to intersectorial politics, since it is reporting directly to the mayor's office and has been given authority corresponding to the magnitude of the tasks.

Transparency, popular participation, dialogue within and among governments, all these ingredients are the components of a first draft for the functioning of a new subject of public management. Other necessary qualities are: agility, connection with the fringes, capacity for topical intervention, planning, evaluation and monitoring, access to quantitative and qualitative data, becoming attuned to local micro-realities, and commitment to global management of the governmental plan.

Territorial focusing

Another requirement for efficiency of preventive policies is territorial focusing. It is necessary to circumscribe the area in which the policy will take place, even if there is in mind that local realities are interpenetrative, since social dynamics do not respect borders between urban spaces.

The inhabitants of a neighborhood cross the city to work, study, enjoy themselves, partake of public or private agencies, meet members of their family or social network. On the other hand, crime "professionals" migrate to the areas where they can increase their gains, reducing costs and risks of illicit operations.

This means that the success in combating crime in one area of the city can involve an increase in insecurity in neighboring areas. It is clear that this consequence is no justification for inaction, but should be taken into account in the overall planning of municipal security policy.

The importance of territorial delineation for preventive policies derives from inter-subjective and objective factors. When the mayor's office, in agreement with the community, defines a local agenda, – which requires focused policy –, mobilization of all entities and resources and involving the means of mass communication within the organized work force, there is the chance to: a) infuse responsibility for the combined initiatives; b) spread hope through success of the undertaking; c) enhance the value of that urban area and those who live there; d) redefine those initiatives in public opinion as protagonists of change, subjects of the transformation, builders of peace, promoters of cooperative urban order and solidarity, and examples for society. When the mayor's office manages to reach these objectives, it will have e) succeeded in converting what was a stigma (that they are residents of a degenerative area that is stained by violence) to a positive (that they are inhabitants of an area that has become a paradigm of urban civility), thereby inverting expectations and bringing about positive stability. Speaking in terms of expectations, we are on an intersubjective ground of security.

From an objective point of view, territorial focusing is indispensable in order that the diagnosis can be sufficiently circumscribed, projects precisely drawn, multisectorial investments converged, so that the necessary synergy and alignments for mobilization of the community itself can be reached, with partnerships and operational networks established at the base level.

In other words the same difficulty that exists in translating this national plan for each municipality is reproduced on an intra-municipal scale: the mayor has to adapt the municipal security plan to the peculiarities of each locale. This effort is perfectly possible, but requires attention to the characteristics of the prevalent dynamics of each neighborhood or community.

Consortia and participative management

It is possible to change the scale of the intervention that intends to alter the social conditions generating violence and are in turn fed *by* them, since the forces that desire the change are adding their own energies and resources in an unprecedented work effort, with professional competence, supported by diagnostics and appropriate technical orientation that guarantees broad participation and transparency in order to build indispensable confidence among the involved parties. This reasoning leads to a proposition: it is possible and necessary to honor a broad agreement, a kind of consortium between the municipal government and all the non-governmental entities that are willing to cooperate.

The process would take the following steps: verification of the richness of initiatives and resources available to the social area in the municipality in question by its local society, and verification of the convenience by which the present picture of dispersion and fragmentation can be replaced by synergy among the forces and convergence of human and material investments; a proposal to elaborate a general diagnosis of the most serious problems so that priorities can be identified and a consensual agenda defined: who are the principal victims? Which are the most vulnerable groups? How and where can actions change their reality, in order to offer them integrative alternatives and enhanced human, cultural, economic, and social value? For identification of the priorities, defining the agenda and mapping the principal aims of the initiatives, the necessity becomes one of planning convergent actions aiming at common objectives

In order to earn credibility, not lose legitimacy and be positive, the entire movement has to respect works that are already underway, guarantee their continuity and avoid raising the temptation, either through coopting by political favoritism, or imposition of an authoritarian straight-jacket, of stifling the freedom and autonomy that characterizes the actions of society and individuals. After planning of the activities, the actions in a broad sense need to be followed transparently so that regular evaluations can enable ongoing correctives, within a dynamic of participational monitoring. Thus,

the consortia will maximize its potential toward social actions and public municipal power, raising the scale of interventions that are turned into social transformation.

The creation of a non-governmental public fund whose administrations would be completely public even though non- governmental, is required in order to capture and invest resources with absolute honesty and within criteria that are not dictated by political parties.

Besides this, the honoring of a Local Municipal Security Contract that would start with agreements among the criminal Justice system (police, public ministry and Judiciary), aim at confrontation with criminal violence and urban disorder and provide conditions for the peaceful resolution of social and interpersonal conflicts would be essential.

Also honored in this Local Municipal Security Contract would be the entities that provide urban security, assets protection, vigilance and protection of victims of violence, or who are involved in the rehabilitation of people at odds with the law, or to the prevention of violence and criminality.

Brazilian police: diagnosis and plans for reform

In the Union's institutional context, the field of public security is characterized by fragmentation. The greater problem is not formal distance, but the absence of organic linkages in the coordination of public policies. This declaration is grave: the respective decision-making processes are not shared within the Union.

Brazilian police, as a rule, are inefficient at prevention and delimited repression, in investigation and in winning the indispensable confidence of the population. Problems connected to corruption and brutality go beyond any acceptable level. They do not submit to rational management, they do not evaluate their own *performance*, and they do not open up to outside control and monitoring. They do not organize from a base-level diagnosis concerning the problems to be confronted, the manner of doing so, from defined priorities and identified goals. They do not plan their activities, starting from diagnostics based on consistent data, nor do they correct their errors by analyzing the results of their initiatives – they are simply ignored. They are reactive, inert and fragmentary machines written in a disjointed and inorganic institutional environment ruled by rigid and inadequate legalisms. The professionals are not appropriately qualified and valued and information is not ordered according to uniform orientation than can facilitate cooperation. There is even a dramatic scrapping of the expertise and the coordination of the difficulties that derive from the dichotomy: civil police - PM (military police). An especially relevant question is that of extra-legal private security (i.e., which is not constituted by law), which has privatized public security, involving policemen in off-duty work which thus holds the State hostage because its dependence on them to make viable an insufficient public budget.

Police reform

The principal orchestrators of the diagnosis and its proposals are reducible to a simple equation: political efficiency and respect for human rights are more than merely compatible among them, they are mutually necessary. From this diagnosis can be deduced what needs to be done:

1. reverse the verified fragmentation within the realm of the Union;
2. change the inadequate and restrictive legal measures within the constitutional and infraconstitutional orbit;
3. stimulate adoption of modular reform programs oriented toward implementation of a police model that aims at the building of rationally managed institutions oriented toward reducing public insecurity and that respect human rights;
4. support promising pilot experiments –and publicize the successful practices;
5. invest in programs that sensitize managers, legislators and public opinion toward accomplishment of the first three items;
6. value the active role in public security of municipalities and their Civil Guards.

Without instituting an agency within the Union's orbit that is given authority and real command power, that integrates operational means, brings together the mechanisms of implementing policies and coordinates the principal sources of specific resources, it will be impossible to change the present picture, which is characterized by dispersal of initiatives, overlapping responsibilities, multiplicity of sources generating diagnostics and action, the pulverization of institutional leadership, and employment without the criteria of resources, lack of mechanisms and methods to accompany it and an evaluation of the Union financed actions, as well as fragmentation and independence of operational means. All this has resulted in governmental inertia, waste of federal resources and, moreover, in an irrational absence of policy.

As to the legal matters: the first great change should be made by means of a constitutional amendment submitted for the approval of the National Congress by the President of the Republic, preferably with the consensual support of the governors – support which had been obtained by the President Lula first national secretary of Public Security during his ten months of management. One PEC proposal was “deconstitutionalization of the police,” which means transferring to State constitutions the power to decide which police model the States wish to have, – which obviously include among the options preservation of the present model. Brazil is a country with the dimensions of a continent and extremely complex socially, extremely diverse, which recommends respect for republican and the federative autonomy of the States, avoiding the imposition of unique models which are by nature insensitive to the local idiosyncrasies – whatever intrinsic merits and benefits may be offered to certain units of the federation. Thus, it makes no sense continuing the old dialogue, or rather, the old conflict, that for more than twenty years has pitted defenders of a unified police force against defenders of the *status quo*. If the problem is not the deficiencies of one or the other

model, but the imposition of the same model applied to all the states – and permanently maintaining traditional standards without having critically tested their limits–, the debate is no longer the question of one or the other (unification or *status quo*) but has become a question of choosing one from numerous options – in this case, imagination, critical observation of the national experience (in light of international experiences) and in which the limits are good sense: we can conceive of models being unified regionally, by metropolitan or municipal district, whether militarized or not, a police force that is territorially divided or constituted according to the seriousness of the crimes etc.

Through this desconstitutionalization some states would change their police force; others would not, even if only because they consider the model has worked well, or even if it is because they lack the political will to make the change. Anyway, the eventual political difficulties of some states would not automatically spread to other states as occurs when the question is to “unify the police or else,” as a single solution for the entire country would imply.

Besides the PEC being in favor of desconstitutionalization, it would be necessary to stipulate some nationally valid general rules to guarantee a jump in quality and to avoid the possibility that creativity and experimentation–stimulated by the PEC – might generate more fragmentation and obstacles to cooperation than we already have today (which, given the present level of the problem, would certainly be difficult). These general rules are the norms for the creation of the Unique System of Public Security (SUSP), also postulated – as is desconstitutionalization itself – in President Lula’s National Public Security Plan. The rules in the agenda would determine the creation of: a) a common basic cycle (i.e., a minimum curriculum), required for the education of all public security professionals in Brazil; b) a common informational language for all police, standardizing the categories and platforms for data exchange (so that there would be time to adapt to the new system requiring computerization); c) systematic management open to evaluation and outside control; d) fixed budgetary quotas for investment for investigation.

It would also be necessary to reinforce the value the role of the municipalities, through application of social policies of prevention and creation of the Civil Guards, which would be prepared to become the paradigm of the police of the future, i.e., organized from a base of new commitments in the areas of education, information, organizational structure, management, integrated investigation, outside control and dialogue with society. The principal commitment of the Guards is community policing, conflict intervention and problem resolution.

The foreseeable future

In the event intelligent public policies, pluri-dimensional, intersectorial and sensitive to local specifications are not implemented on a large scale,

capable of intercepting microdynamics immediately that are generators of violent criminal behavior, above all of a deadly nature, in a scenario that maintains present indicators of inequality, poverty, degraded quality of life, educational deficiency and precariousness of access to rights, facilitates family crises and generates vulnerability, lowering of self-esteem, increasing the sense of exclusion, stigmatization, of being socially invisible and presents a double cultural message, the consequences can only be to aggravate the present picture of criminal violence that already constitutes a tragedy, particularly when it affects poor and black young males, instigating an authentic genocide.

It is this negative picture that tends to aggravate the problem, above all, if two conditions persist: a) an institutional system of public security that does not value its professionals and that is fragmented, inefficient, corrupted, discredited, brutal, racist, and which feeds the circuit of violence and of criminality itself; b) the entrepreneurship of arms and drug trafficking that actively takes advantage of the precariousness of the conditions of life and vulnerability of the subjective processes of youth with slim and rare opportunities and perspective for integration within society.

With regard to social and cultural crime prevention policies there have been advances in the country (although topical, dispersed and insufficient in scale, given the absence of synergy and integration within power centers and between public and private institutions. With regard to police reforms the advances are still meager, inexpressive, topical, spasmodic, cyclic, non-sustainable, non-systemic, eventual and disperse.

What makes this prospective exercise in the field of public security more challenging and interesting, however, is the historical character of legislation, the parameters by which crimes are defined, which in turn, are transformed according to the changes in social relations, economy and technology. A possible future can be imagined in which drugs – such as are classified today – are no longer consumed, having been replaced by new psychoactive substances of a synthetic nature or by effects produced by direct mental and machine connections, under different conditions. In this case, the control could become so complex and costly that the traditional repressive policies become inapplicable to the extent in which enjoyment can correspond to a virtual flood of communication, transported and received by simple network movements, through *uploads* and *downloads*. In an information-, knowledge- and communications- based society in which flexibility and the “customizing” that individualization tends to impart, perhaps the great threat will be the violation of intellectual property, which implying the need for profound modifications in the very conception of police work, as well as in the organizational structure of public institutions.

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ABSTRACT – Around 45 thousand people are victims of deadly crime in Brazil yearly. Most of the victims are young, poor and black, from the shanty towns and slums of the large cities. Police are part of the problem: they have generally been ineffective, unilaterally reactive, corrupt and brutal, mostly because their organizational structures are not suited to their need to perform their constitutional obligations. On the other hand, policies for the prevention of crime are still restricted and fragmented. Only a bleak future can be envisioned if deep legal and institutional reform is not implemented, and the immediate causes of violence are not targeted.

KEYWORDS – Crime prevention policies, Prevention policies and human rights, Forecast of deadly crimes in Brazil, Present and future of Brazilian police.

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