

Public Safety Policy in the State of Minas Gerais (2003-2016): Agenda Problems and Path Dependence

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Abstract: In this paper, we reconstitute the Minas Gerais state public safety policy with regard to its agenda and discontinuity over thirteen years (2003-2016). Our purpose is to present reflections that help understand the impasses which ultimately led to the burial of a reputedly successful public policy and to a return to the old way public safety has historically been managed by Brazilian federative states. Our findings inform that the priority agenda of integration promoted by the State Secretariat of Social Defense did manage to institutionalize itself for some time. Nonetheless, as the office goes through political transformations, priorities in the agenda also change, denoting path dependence, given the resumption of the institutional arrangement that existed prior to 2003, with police institutions on one side and the prison system on the other. In this context, the novelty is the permanence of prevention actions.

Keywords: Public Safety, Discontinuity, Agenda Problem, Path dependence, Minas Gerais.

I. INTRODUCTION

In national and international imaginary, Brazil stands as a nation marked by violence. As many as 60,000 intentional violent deaths are annually recorded in the country, which is equivalent to a yearly Hiroshima bomb, disproportionately affecting young dark-skinned males living in big cities' peripheries (FBSP, 2017). Despite the gigantic magnitude of the phenomenon, even as compared to what was observed in the country in previous decades, the debate on causes of and solutions for this problem has so far achieved little consensus (Cerqueira and Lobão, 2004).

A relatively majority current of thought has historically explained criminality as a result of – mostly moral – poverty of certain layers of the population (Soares, 2006). Lack of financial resources to secure mere survival would lead some individuals to perpetrate crimes against assets, while the lack of moral restraints would cause these same subjects to use violence – especially lethal violence – to resolve conflicts (Thompson, 1983). Within such context, public safety policies should be geared towards the normatization of poorer classes, with the aim of reducing opportunities that might result in violence and of removing from circulation individuals considered to be dangerous (Bretas and Rosemberg, 2013). It comes down, then, to a matter of keeping watch on the poor – the only ones seen as criminals.

The result from this historical conception on the causes of crime in Brazil was a reduction of public safety to an excessive surveillance over certain layers of the population, via a combination of police action plus mass incarceration and a selective operation of the criminal justice system (Lima and Sinhoretto, 2015). It is not by chance that today we rank third among countries that most heavily resort to incarceration, with more than half of those detained being provisional prisoners (DEPEN and FBSP, 2017). This has not prevented us from having one of the highest murder rates in the world (UNODC, 2013).

As to the institutionality of public safety policies, given the fact that we are a federation of 26 states in addition to the Federal District, all them enjoying autonomy in that area. In the terms of Article 144 of Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution, the states have primary responsibility for the organization of Military Police – the Army's auxiliary and reserve force in charge of ostensive patrolling – and Civil Police, responsible for the investigation of criminal offenses. By force of infra-constitutional legislation, the state Executive is further in charge of developing policies for the prison system.

Despite such autonomy, Brazilian states have historically shown very little variation in their public safety models devised for the task of managing the violence problem (Beato and Silveira, 2014). A disastrous consequence of this pattern is the difficulty to think about it from a more preventative perspective, more focused on ensuring safety to all citizens and less centered around surveillance on individuals

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permanently seen as suspects (Ratton, Galvão and Fernandes, 2014).

As one of the states comprising the Brazilian Federation, Minas Gerais has been pointed at as a success case from the point of view of the constitution of a new arrangement for coordinating public safety policies (Sapori, 2007). As from 2003, the state instituted a novelty in the area: a new way of articulating police forces, combined with prison system modernization and development of preventive policies (Sapori and Andrade, 2013). The experience has already been widely evaluated from the perspective of the management model adopted (Assis, 2013), and for effectiveness of its policing model and prevention actions (Beato and Silveira, 2014). All such reviews highlight the gains achieved in terms of reduced criminality and improved institutional public safety framework (Teixeira, 2013). Despite that, the model was unstructured in 2016.

In this paper we reconstitute the public safety policy of Minas Gerais over the past thirteen years, with the aim to understand why, despite all innovations presented, the state has ended up discontinuing the model implemented in 2003. Would it be a case of agenda problems, given the fact that the integration between public safety offices ceases to be a priority as time passes? Or, rather, a matter of path dependence, as the innovative arrangement fails to bring about the expected political results?

In order to answer these questions, we start by contextualizing the violence problem in the state and the historical processes that favored a differentiated look by the state to that theme in the early 2000s. Next we highlight how a public safety model was consolidated on the basis of the binomial prevention / repression, whose governance was to be exercised by a Collegiate capable of consolidating the structuring axes of the social defense system's policy. To close the argument, we underline some aspects of the political game contributing to a setback in that policy and leading to the resumption of the previous pattern.

II. VIOLENT CRIMINALITY AS A PUBLIC SAFETY PROBLEM

According to Frey (2000: 226), public policies ought to be described as a cycle with five phases: "perception and definition of problems, agenda-setting, designing of programs and decision, implementation of policies and, finally, evaluation of policies and possible correction of

actions". In order to understand how innovation takes place in Minas Gerais public safety, we must understand how this theme becomes a public issue to the point of deserving special attention from the State Executive. It is therefore imperative to speak of crime rates.

Violent criminality was a major public and social problem in Brazil throughout the 90s. In Minas Gerais it was no different. The state recorded 98 violent crimes per 100,000 inhabitants in 1986, and by 1997 that figure had already reached 193 violent crimes per 100,000 inhabitants, which meant a 98.5% increase. Weighing heavily on that indicator was the huge magnitude of crimes against property, with the phenomenon concentrating in highly populated municipalities, regions that were more industrialized and advanced from an economic viewpoint (Marinho and Andrade, 2011). Crime was definitely on the rise, along with the expanding urbanization and industrialization that characterized the State of Minas Gerais and Brazil itself in the 1980s and 1990s (Batitucci *et al.*, 2002). Homicide was the top public concern, as it spread over the entire Minas Gerais territory, given its use as a mechanism to manage conflict (Beato, 1998). The social group represented by black young males living in the outskirts of big cities stood up as the main victims and perpetrators of those crimes (Marinho and Andrade, 2011).

Cruz *et al.* (2011) understand that the deterioration and the increase in criminality rates in Minas Gerais throughout the 1990s was the result of a combination of three different factors. The first one was a lack of investment in the safety area, as a result of the serious financial crisis that ravaged the state. Shortage of money led to delayed payment of salaries and to downgraded working conditions, including lack of material resources to carry out even basic police activities (patrol cars not even having fuel, for instance), which left deep wounds in the force and led to a strike by Minas Gerais Military Police (PMMG, with the initials in Portuguese) in 1997 (Cruz *et al.*, 2011: 10). The financial crisis also contributed to a deterioration of the prison system: with no new units being built, prisoners were 'stored' in police station jails, thus simultaneously jeopardizing prisoner re-socialization and investigative work – as Civil Police had to keep watch over prisoners in their custody (Batitucci *et al.*, 2002).

Another sticking point was the structural disarticulation between Military and Civil police. As

these institutions are each charged with one of the two complementary parts of the same job – the policing cycle –, it was necessary and urgent to implement institutional mechanisms capable of tackling the problem of disjointed actions between them. In view of there not being an information system shared by the two institutions, data collected for [Military] police reporting would often fail to be used during [Civil] police investigations, which greatly constrained crime-solving rates (Sapori, 2007). Giving the varied territorial division between the institutions (Military Police and Civil Police), occurrences recorded in one town would have to be forwarded to another, which meant that human resources would be employed in transfer activities rather than in ostensive policing (Batitucci *et al.*, 2002). Also, allegations of police mistreatment were becoming ever more frequent, thus indicating that the transition to democracy had not been completed within local police forces (Beato, 1999). It was imperative to add accountability to the police activity, and to bring administrative and operational rationalization to police organizations, thereby improving their effectiveness and ensuring appropriate management, logistics and human resources allocation. (Batitucci *et al.*, 2002).

The third point was the prison issue. By the late 1990s, most prisoners – both temporary and convicts – were kept in jails adjacent to police stations, while the penitentiary system itself counted less than 1/3 of the incarcerated population (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2004). In face of rising criminality and scarce resources, the strategy adopted was to increase the number of imprisoned subjects, regardless of imprisonment conditions. The limit situation came with the macabre “ciranda da morte” (death ‘ciranda’ – Portuguese word for the children’s singing game *ring-a-ring o’ roses*): jail overcrowding was such that every once in a while an inmate was chosen to die so as to reduce the number of individuals sharing the same prison cell (Oliveira, Ribeiro and Bastos, 2015). A landmark initiative in response to that appalling situation was the respective Minas Gerais Legislature’s CPI (Parliamentary Inquiry Commission, with the initials in Portuguese), whose 1997 report informed that prisons were serving to strengthen criminal organizations rather than providing an opportunity for responsabilization and re-socialization.

Thus, by the late 1990s, the following three actions were perceived as crucial in the constitution of an effective public safety policy: *i*) resumption of financial investments in police and prison institutions; *ii*) improvement of the organizational arrangement of

police forces, so as to integrate their work and reduce competition between them; *iii*) reform of the penitentiary system in order to reduce overcrowding and prisoner mortality (Batitucci *et al.*, 2002). Under pressure from academic institutions, especially the Minas Gerais Federal University, its Center for Studies on Criminality and Public Safety (CRISP) and its Citizenship Centers Extension Program (*Programa de Extensão Polos Reprodutores de Cidadania* - POLOS), a fourth priority axis was included, namely, crime prevention actions promoting access to justice, reducing recidivism among former convicts, and curtailing homicide among black youth living in the cities’ outskirts.

III. CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIAL DEFENSE SYSTEM: AGENDA SETTING AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Setting the agenda is the second phase in the public policy cycle, and one of the most complex. In addition to diagnoses showing the existence of something that downgrades the citizens’ quality of life, it is further necessary to convince government authorities that acting on it is worthwhile. In that regard, Secchi (2011: 35) asserts that “if a problem is identified by some political actor, and if such actor has an interest in resolving that problem, then they can struggle to get said problem included among priorities for action. A list of priorities thus built is known as an ‘agenda’ ”.

Gelinsk and Siebel (2008: 230) explain that, in order to understand what agenda-setting actually is, we must bear in mind that “due to the complexity and quantity of problems tackled by policy makers” only the priorities will be given proper attention. So, we should focus our interest on understanding how agenda priorities are defined. Nogueira (2006) sums up this issue in a question: *Why do some issues and problems come – at a given moment – to be considered relevant enough to deserve governmental action?* This is a structural question, given the false impression that agenda setting is a predictable, linear or even neutral process, along which all the various actors involved will enjoy equal chance to have their claims and demands heard. According to that author, there are situations such as international events, natural accidents, spectacular crimes and social crises that would justify drastic measures and which are hardly foreseeable. Such episodes may impact agenda priorities, thus changing its course and diverting public action. Thus, in order to understand how an agenda is built, we must focus on participants of the political game – who may be

“classified as visible, i.e., politicians, the media, political parties, pressure groups, etc, and invisible, such as academicians and bureaucrats” (Souza, 2006: 30).

The Minas Gerais agenda-setting process was launched when Aécio Neves – PSDB (2003-2006 tenure) was elected as state governor. At that moment, reforms were initiated in the existing model of public administration, under what was then called “*Choque de Gestão*” (management shock),¹ a concept that guided government policies across the board – including public safety. That management shock “had as its main objective to compel state public administration to adopt new behavioral standards and to take a more aggressive stance in the search for greater efficiency and effectiveness” (Queiroz and Ckagnazaroff, 2010: 681). It intended to be a long term policy, starting up in 2003 and aiming at a series of agreed landmark targets extending until 2023, in order to prevent electoral changes from breaking the transformation cycle.² The intended aim was to resume investments in priority areas and improve public service delivery, so as to “turn Minas Gerais into the best Brazilian state to live in” (Ibidem).

As a practice, the *Choque de Gestão* proposed to articulate an unprecedented variable remuneration system in the public sector, with each body of the state Executive signing a results-oriented management contract (*Contrato de Gestão de Acordo por Resultados*) based on performance indicators. The model was operationalized from the signing of the management contract, under which the public body undertook to deliver on defined commitments to society, which would then be measured by certain target-achievement indicators (Assis, 2012: 60). Achievement of the targets would attract annual bonuses – called *Prêmio por Produtividade* or ‘productivity award’ – proportional to performance. It was a simple recipe: if all public servants engaged in the new model, striving to achieve the agreed targets, they would be paid an year-end bonus, while the citizens would benefit from the resulting improvement in quality of life (Queiroz and Ckagnazaroff, 2010; Assis, 2012).

In the area of public safety, agenda-setting took into consideration both the relevant diagnoses drawn in the 1990s³ and the *Choque de Gestão* principles in order to create a new management model (Assis, 2012). In early 2003, the State Secretariat of Social Defense (SEDS) was instituted in substitution for the former Public Safety, Military Police and Justice & Human Rights state secretariats (all since then extinct). This new design met the concept of a state system of social defense, which reorganized the operational coordination of existing repressive dimensions (police action and prison system), while further integrating them with crime prevention policies (Sapori, 2007).

Prior to 2003, the Civil Police was tied to the State Secretariat of Public Safety, whereas the Military Police reported directly to the Governor. Most of the prison population was in Civil Police custody rather than under the prison policy dictated by the Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights. Before the 2000s there was no state office in charge of crime prevention actions. As State Law #56 took force in January 2, 2003, Social Defense becomes a category that combines prevention and repression strategies, to be implemented by all bodies comprising the SEDS. Meanwhile, specific coordination was instituted for social prevention actions – something unheard of before in the safety area, used to structuring itself on the basis of primarily repressive actions (Teixeira, 2013).

SEDS’ structure, however, presented a differentiated management of the two police forces, insofar as it prescribed operational subordination but at the same time ensured their administrative and financial autonomy. This meant that all decisions pertaining to promotion, command appointment, budget, financial execution, correctional activities, and other such functions, remained beyond the competence of the Secretary of Social Defense and in the hands of police chiefs (Sapori, 2007). Nonetheless, coordination of police action strategies turned into a SEDS competency, and should thenceforth be structured by a social defense system’s Collegiate. This was a means to ensure that police organizations – which traditionally have seen themselves as in charge

¹In portuguese, “*Choque de Gestão*”, meaning a sudden massive injection of entrepreneurial spirit and managerial procedures.

²As Workers’ Party candidate Fernando Pimentel won the 2014 election, and as a result of the traditional opposition between his PT and Aécio’s PSDB, all measures structuring the *Choque de Gestão* were dismantled along with its derivatives (results-based agreements and productivity bonuses). Thus, ever since 2015 the model has inexisted within the realm of public administration in the State of Minas Gerais.

³In that regard, João Pinheiro Foundation (FJP) played a relevant role. Under the leadership of Professor Eduardo Batitucci, it conducted numerous analyses on local public security weaknesses, followed by contextual analyses of the situation of crime and violence in the state, thus providing a reference for the payment of bonuses according to results achieved. For more about it, refer to: <http://www.fjp.mg.gov.br/index.php/institucional/43-institucional/geral/73-nucleo-de-estudos-em-seguranca-publica-da-fundacao-joao-pinheiro>, accessed on November 9, 2017.

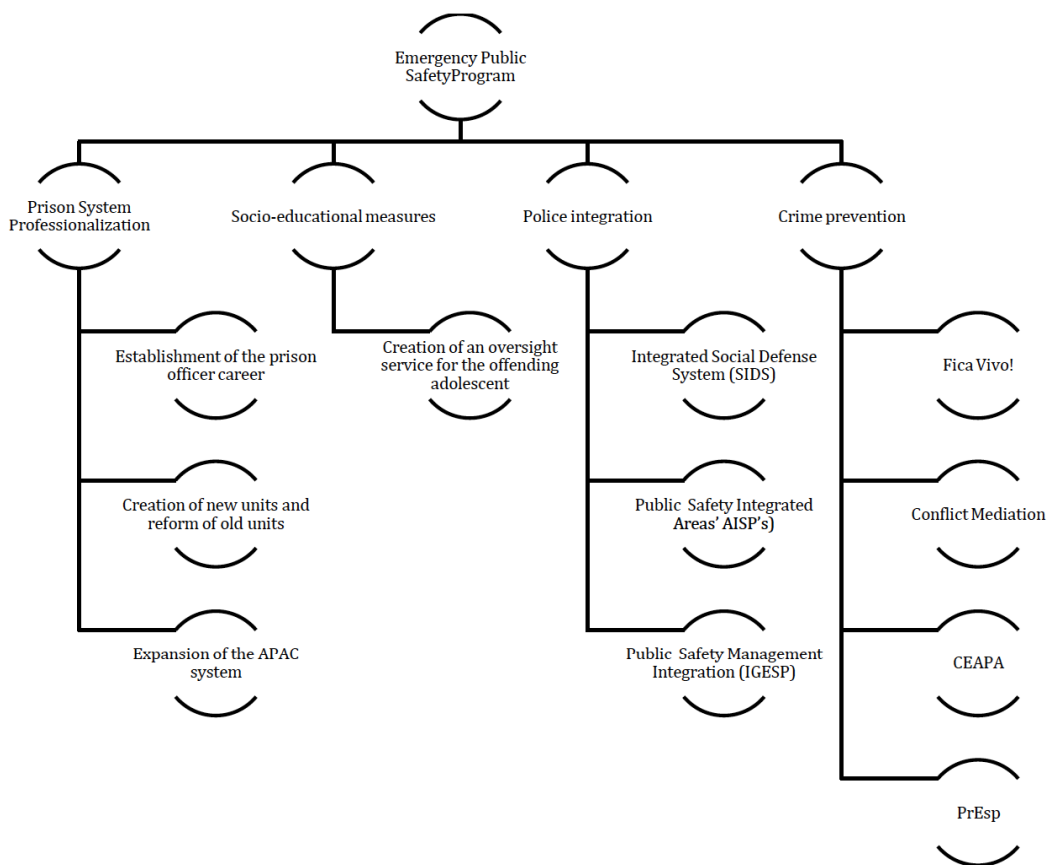


Figure 1: Systematization of the Emergency Public Safety Program (2003-2023).

Source: authors.

of public safety actions – would collaborate with the new model, for having part of their autonomy thus preserved (Sapori and Andrade, 2013). It is worth mentioning that this model of governance and integration of Military and Civil police did not propose any kind of internal reform of the organizational culture in either of the two police forces. Even so, it met with resistance and raised conflict from the moment it was first announced (Teixeira, 2013).

So as to guide the new secretariat's actions, an Emergency Public Safety Program was designed and structured along four main axes, each in turn unfolded onto projects planned to be executed from 2003 through 2023 and intended to compound the aforementioned *Choque de Gestão* (Figure 1).

The 'Prison System Professionalization' axis was structured on the basis of three projects, beginning with the construction of three new penitentiaries under agreements with the Federal Government (Cruz *et al.*, 2011). Concomitantly, the state's Executive would take charge of renovating the jails adjacent to police stations and of transferring their administration to the prison

system, so that the Civil Police would no longer have to account for prisoner custody (Sapori, 2007). Lastly, the state would invest in more humane modes of imprisonment, as illustrated by the experience of the Association for Convict Protection and Assistance (APAC), which adopted a "methodology of convict reintegration by means of working and learning activities with educational, judicial and spiritual support" (Cruz *et al.*, 2011: 24).

The 'Socio-Educational Measures' axis adopted similar principles: capacity expansion by constructing new units; modernization, with the adoption of new management systems; humanization, with the hiring of new agents and technical staff among psychologists, social assistants and other professionals (Cruz *et al.*, 2011).

The third axis included both a preventive and repressive dimension, and should be implemented by means of 'Police Integration'. It was organized in three different projects. The first one was an information integration project that relied on the Integrated Social Defense System (SIDS), itself comprised of two

operative centers: the Integrated Service and Dispatch Center (CIAD)⁴ and the Integrated Social Defense Information Center (CINDS). In order to feed these two latter systems, a Social Defense Events Register (REDS) was created, standardizing the way crime records should be kept by both police forces (Military and Civil) and thus enabling advancements in terms of official counting and target achievement verification.

The second project of the police integration and management axis was denominated 'Public Safety Integrated Areas' (AISP's). This was a segment involving big investments, both financially and politically, for the idea was to accommodate in one and same space the headquarters of both the Military and Civil police – to share the same constituency for action. From a management viewpoint, such integration was expected to bring the two police institutions closer together and to encourage joint efforts, shared planning and the pursuit of common goals. Though still being two separate institutions, they could come to resemble a complete cycle format, which would represent a strongly symbolic change in the way they operate.

The third and perhaps more daring project of this axis involved the implementation of operational planning for police activities. Named 'Public Safety Management Integration' (IGESP), it drew inspiration from New York's Compstat, under which crime records are taken as a basis for target setting and outcome evaluation (Beato and Silveira, 2014). Its Minas Gerais version involved a dynamics of monthly meetings at which the situation of violent crime was discussed and an action plan was set to deal with it. This project was highly praised in view of its broad participation: "the PM, the PC, and the SEDS – which mediated the meeting; plus the Public Attorney's Office, the Judiciary, the City Hall and other authorities" (Assis, 2012: 82). These meetings were the occasion for an effective evaluation of the two police forces' joint work.

The truly innovative part of the Emergency Social Defense Program was found in its fourth axis, which focused on crime prevention and comprised four programs: (i) *Fica Vivo!*,⁵ geared to curtailing homicide

among youth from 12 to 24 years of age;⁶ (ii) Conflict Mediation, with focus on conflict management and on securing interpersonal and community rights to families, groups and communities;⁷ (iii) the CEAPA, support center dealing with convictions and alternatives to prison; and (iv) the PrEsp, geared towards social reintegration of former prison inmates.⁸ It is important to stress that all these programs could count on active participation by the Federal University of Minas Gerais, which designed the pilot programs that were later incorporated into the public policy (Beato and Silveira, 2014).

Therefore, in the beginning of Governor Aécio Neves' administration (2003), problems chartered as priorities in the public safety area during the 1990s got included as top items in the state's agenda, leading to the constitution of the SEDS and to the Emergency Social Defense Program, in which related projects were detailed and started to be implemented as of 2003. Expectations were that by 2023 the area would be firmly set over four main articulated axes: prison system, offender adolescent care system, integration of police organizations, and crime prevention.

As the Emergency Program was being implemented, it was only natural to expect that priorities would change with time and give room to others. Thus, in order to anticipate contextual changes – which would call for new agenda-setting processes – a Social Defense Integration Collegiate was instituted and regulated by Act #56 of January 29, 2003, and by State Decree #43295 of April 23, 2003. The idea was to make sure that all offices involved in implementing the social defense policy would take part in decision making and elect the key targets for state action at each moment, which in principle should prevent conflicts and disputes.

The Collegiate was chaired by the State Secretary of Social Defense, and its members included: the Deputy Secretary of Social Defense; the Undersecretary of Penitentiary Administration; the

⁴The CIAD was thought of as a unified operations center tackling radiophone calls to Military and Civil Police and the Fire Department. In addition to speeding up communication between population and police, it would also ensure integration of the information.

⁵Literally 'Stay alive!', but also meaning 'Watch out!' in the Portuguese expression.

⁶For a detailed analysis of the *Fica Vivo!* Program, see: BEATO FILHO, Cláudio Chaves et al. *Reducción de homicidios en Minas Gerais: un análisis del programa «Fica Vivo!»*. *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, n. 116, p. 129-158, 2018.

⁷For a detailed analysis of the Conflict Mediation Program, see: SOUZA, Rafaelle Lopes; CORREA, MAPC. *Políticas Públicas de Prevenção Social à Criminalidade no processo de Resolução de Conflitos: uma leitura da experiência mineira*. *O Social em Questão*, Ano XVIII, n. 31, p. 33-56, 2014.

⁸For a detailed analysis of the PrEsp, see: BARBALHO, Lidiane de Almeida; BARROS, Vanessa Andrade de. *Entre a cruz e a espada: a reintegração de egressos do sistema prisional a partir da política pública do governo de Minas Gerais*. *Psicologia em Revista*, v. 20, n. 3, p. 549-565, 2014.

Commander-in-Chief of the Military Police; the Chief of Civil Police; the Commander-in-Chief of the Military Fire Brigade; and the General Public Defender. All these authorities met on a monthly basis to set targets for each area and to evaluate the extent to which these were being achieved. The Collegiate was the decision-making body in charge of setting and approving guidelines and strategies aimed at integrating the aforementioned four theme areas, while further defining and approving work groups dedicated to specific matters. Also, it was in charge of devising and approving integrated plans, programs and goals for the social defense system; supervising the operational management for integration of the various segments comprising social defense; evaluating the fulfillment of established plans and targets.

As the Collegiate was chaired by the State Secretary of Social Defense, this actor's capacity to influence the remainder in setting the agenda proved more relevant than what was initially expected, along the 13 years in which this arrangement was in effect (2003-2016). As new members took seat, such as parliamentarians and state attorneys with little familiarity with diagnoses on causes of crime, gradually violence reduction started being relegated to the background, with the integrated arrangement giving way to the typical disintegration that characterizes public safety actions in Brazil. In our understanding, the agenda was thus captured by path dependence. We will elaborate further on this argument in the next section.

IV. DISCONTINUITY OF PUBLIC SAFETY POLICY: AGENDA PROBLEMS AND PATH DEPENDENCE

According to Weaver and Rockman (1993), the path that ensures the competence of governments to effectively implement public policies is drawn by the following line of actions: (a) systematize and keep priorities among conflicting demands; (b) focus the use of funds more sharply; (c) innovate when previous initiatives fail; (d) coordinate conflicting goals, articulating some coherence; (e) represent diffuse and scarcely organized interests; (f) ensure effective implementation of policies once they have been decided upon; (g) make policy continuity viable. All these items require political skill to ensure agenda continuity, even when those involved have disparate preferences, and this is a key competence for the effectiveness of any public policy.

Starting from this definition, we argue that the social defense model implemented in Minas Gerais in 2003

came to an end because of changes in SEDS leadership occurred along thirteen years (2003-2016). These changes weakened the Collegiate's role, leading to alterations in the agenda and somehow resuming the historical trajectory of integrated public safety policies, with two independent police forces (Military and Civil) and a separate prison system. From the initial innovations, only the prevention programs were left. This change in course back to the previous standard is what the political science calls "path dependence".

According to Bernardi (2012), the various meanings ascribed to the expression 'path dependence' tend to emphasize that history matters and that; therefore, actors are not always completely free to make decisions. They often need to conform to the existing pattern of a given area (like the separation and power disputes between Military and Civil Police), or have their choices conditioned by previously made decisions (like the creation of a prevention policy). Thus, what politicians will seek in their decision making processes is to maximize certain results at the lowest possible cost (which includes minimal harm to their public image). For this reason, a resolution that is successful at a given moment (for instance, giving more autonomy to organizations in order to prevent conflict) may be repeated at another moment in hope that it will bring about the same effects.

The trend towards path dependence is often seen as a constant feature of Brazilian policies, which would explain the difficulty to implement innovations in the field of public safety in our country (Teixeira, 2013). Because of that, "it becomes indispensable to identify the operative logic of parts" comprising the chessboard of the political game (Bernardi, 2012: 164). "This is so because potential sources of change, as well as susceptibility to changes, will vary according to the explanatory mechanism in operation" (Ibidem). Furthermore, "without a clear understanding of the mechanisms that sustain stability and lock-in it will hardly be possible to comprehend and outline the conditions under which any changes would be more likely" (Ibidem).

Our hypothesis is that the social defense arrangement created in 2003 was later progressively discontinued because decision makers would benefit more from a return to the previously existing standard (disconnection between institutions and distance from themes related to social defense), rather than from the pursuit of integration between the four axes comprising

Table 1: Political Agents in Charge of Social Defense in Minas Gerais (2003-2016)

Period	Governor	Secretary of Social Defense	Profile of the Secretary of Social Defense	Priority items in the agenda
2003-2006	Aécio Neves (PSDB)	2003-2004: Ibrahim Abi Ackel	Former Congressman (PSDB)	Implementation of Gestão por Acordo de Resultados Agenda setting through the Emergency of Public Safety Program
		2004-2006: Antônio Anastasia	Public servant and Professor of Law, affiliated to the PSDB	Integration of Military and Civil Police Prison system expansion Instituting and expanding a crime prevention system Reducing crime rates
2007-2010	Aécio Neves (PSDB)	2007-2010: Maurício de Oliveira Campos Júnior	Renowned lawyer and Professor of Law, without apparent party affiliation	Creating a new management model for the prison system Reducing crime rates
2010-2010	Antônio Anastasia (PSDB)	2010-2010: Moacyr Lobato de Campos Filho	Public Attorney without apparent party affiliation	Delivering new construction works Greater autonomy to police organizations
2011-2014	Antônio Anastasia (PSDB)	2011-2012: Lafayette Andrada	State Representative (PSDB)	Greater autonomy to police organizations
		2013-2014: Rômulo Ferraz	Public Attorney without apparent party affiliation	Greater autonomy to the crime prevention system Greater autonomy to the prison system
2015-2016	Fernando Pimentel (PT)	2015-2016: Bernardo Santana de Vasconcelos	State Representative (PR)	Reinstituting the Secretariat of Public Safety Creation of the Secretariat of Prison Administration Creation of the Undersecretariat of Crime Prevention Policies

Source: Authors.

the aforementioned Emergency Program. We start from the principle that agenda priorities go changing in accordance with gains and losses envisaged by the Secretary of Social Defense. With that in view, we want to understand at which point does the greater autonomy of the institutions involved (police forces, penitentiary system and prevention policy) becomes preferable, even if it implies an increase in crime. To that effect, this section focuses on changes occurred in the office [of Secretary of Social Defense], so as to shed more light on the decision makers that were at the command of SEDS between 2003 and 2013 (Table 1).

In the first term of Governor Aécio Neves (2003 – 2006, PSDB), two men commanded the SEDS. The first one, former Congressman Ibrahim Abi-Ackel (2003-2004), had little political influence with the bodies comprising the state's social defense system. So, effectively commanding the Social Defense was his deputy Luís Flávio Saporí – an academician with broad knowledge on the theme. He was responsible for organizing the Emergency Social Defense Program, which took into account both the diagnoses drawn on causes of crime (and on measures that should be

taken to reduce it) and popular will as expressed at Public Hearings held in years before. Given Ackel's political weakness, the Integrated Social Defense Collegiate would only start working in July 2004, more than a year after the state's public safety policy was restructured. Effective installation of the Collegiate was only made possible by a change in SEDS' top management, thenceforth co-managed by Antônio Anastásia⁹ - who at the time almost directly represented the authority of Minas Gerais' Governor.

Under the leadership of Antônio Anastasia (2004-2006, PSDB), assisted by his deputy secretary Luís Flávio Saporí, crime reduction targets were set. To achieve them, the basic mechanism at hand was the Emergency Social Defense Program, which by then had already been in effect for a year. As presupposed under the *Choque de Gestão* and the Results-based

⁹It should also be stressed that Secretary of Social Defense Antônio Anastasia was at the time accumulating another function in the state government: that of Secretary of Planning – an absolutely key position in any reforming administration, with ample decision-making power over the budget, which certainly contributed to the effective operation of the Social Defense Collegiate, especially with regard to its financial decisions.

Agreement, the Collegiate was operating continuously, with the competencies of each participating body of SEDS being constantly evoked at the meetings. More than ensuring that the institutionality created in 2003 would indeed become a reality, the Collegiate also guaranteed that the agencies comprising the SEDS felt responsible and duly awarded for the construction of a better integrated public safety combining prevention and repression. The presence of a highly empowered secretary also made it possible for initial impasses and conflicts to be overcome, most notably in face of resistance against the integration of police forces. The deputy secretary's technical expertise enabled program projects to be reviewed by reference to indicators and available budget and human resources. This combination of political weight and technical skills ensured that the Collegiate could exercise proper governance over public safety actions and thus consolidate the new institutional arrangement (Sapori, 2007).

Even in view of such favorable scenario, there were evident difficulties to be overcome in order to achieve some of the targets – for instance, integration of police organizations. According to Sapori and Andrade (2013), one of the top priorities during the years 2003 to 2006 was integration of police information, which took up big investments and led to some advancement. But its effective implementation was not achieved in that time, particularly as far as the heart of the project was considered, namely, the SIDS. Its technological requirements and high costs impacted the implementation schedule and potentialized resistance and conflicts within the police institutions (Assis, 2012). Notwithstanding that, evaluations made of the Minas Gerais model indicate that the proposed information system was one of the most successful among actions taken at the time, having resulted in the most relevant advancements of the period, despite the declining long term investment and the precarious maintenance of such an innovative statewide system (Sapori and Andrade, 2013).

In Aécio Neves's second term (2007-2010, PSDB), Social Defense was headed by lawyer Maurício de Oliveira Campos Júnior (2007-2010), whose deputy was Moacyr Lobato, a public prosecutor without any technical knowledge of the public safety area. In terms of agenda-setting, this second term brought two main differences as compared to the previous one. As the secretary did not have clear political connections to the governor (in contrast with former secretary Antônio Anastasia), he did not represent Aécio's decision-

making power, which caused relations with bodies comprising the social defense system to be more conflictive. Also, the arrangement now lacked an expert in the area, thus becoming an easier prey to political interests alien to the purpose of improving public safety.

From 2007 to 2010, despite the official agenda having placed crime reduction as a priority, there appeared clear signs of instability in the institutional arrangement, as each participating public body showed growing concern with its own visibility. In their efforts to achieve the intended results, policemen started in 2008 to resort to a data falsification strategy "in order to simulate a less serious crime situation in the region where they operated" (Assis, 2012: 127). Precisely because of that, the Results-based Agreement was widely seen in the public safety area as a failed strategy whose outcomes were contrary to what had been intended, as it ended up encouraging "the reclassification phenomenon" (Idem, 2012: 131).

Another mark of that period was the design of new management models for the prison system, as in the case of "co-management or indirect management of custody units" under agreements with the public initiative (Cruz *et al.*, 2011: 24). To that effect, a "bidding process was opened in 2009 for the construction of a penitentiary complex capable of accommodating 3000 inmates, to be built in the Belo Horizonte Metropolitan Region through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP)" (Ibidem). Moreover, a consultancy firm was hired to develop a new management model for the prison system (later to be named GESPEN), "in which standard operating procedures were outlined and targets defined for each area involved" (Idem, p. 23).

In early 2010, Aécio Neves leaves the government to run for the Senate. Antônio Anastasia – PSDB (2010-2010) becomes the new Governor, and the Secretariat of Social Defense goes to his deputy, public prosecutor Moacyr Lobato (2010-2010). The new deputy secretary was Daniel Diniz Nepomuceno, whose experience in public management was limited to having been a Belo Horizonte city councilor. As the new electoral period approached, and despite all the discourse about crime reduction being top in the agenda, these two new incumbents did what is traditionally done in Brazilian politics in order to attract votes to their allied political base: inaugurate projects and conceal problems – such as, for example, any increase in violent crime or any budget constraints. It

should be said that the intended outcome was indeed achieved: Antônio Anastasia was elected the new State Governor (2011-2014, PSDB) and his allied political base reached majority at the Legislative Assembly.

For the new Anastasia administration, state representative Lafayette Andrada (2011-2012, PSDB) takes office as head of SEDS, having as his deputy Genilson Ribeiro Zeferino, a technician with broad experience in the prison system area. The proposal seemed to be going back to the politician/technician combination that had resulted in the implementation of the integrated model of social defense between 2004 and 2007. However, profile differences between the two secretaries became evident from the start, fueling tensions that proved hard to overcome. Such level of conflict spread to the top of the other institutions involved (police forces, prison system and socio-educational system), reducing the Integrated Collegiate to something merely symbolic in the end, as coordination problems were referred directly to the governor.¹⁰ Thus, SEDS' governance over the four priority areas was utterly undermined, which compromised the entire social defense arrangement (Sapori and Andrade, 2013).

The years 2011 and 2012 saw major setbacks for the social defense model, with highlights being a strike by Civil Police Chiefs and a reorganization of the Military Police's territorial areas, which put an end to the AISP (Sapori and Andrade, 2013). One should recall that an "important historical characteristic of Brazil is the presence of a military character in policing institutions" (Teixeira, 2013: 382), which leads the Military Police to perceive itself as the most important organization in the game. Placing it at the same level as the Civil Police, from the informational, operational and tactical points of view, had already been understood back in 2003 as downgrading the institution. This was the reason why the Military Police had peremptorily rejected the integration model, and was the first to boycott it (as soon as a political opportunity opened up), starting with a revision of its territorial distribution (Sapori and Andrade, 2013). In other words, this was the moment when integration between PM and PC collapsed.

In view of constant questioning about data forgery, statistics on crime ceased to be publicized, which

entailed huge social pressure. In news media, some intellectuals dealing in the field started to come forth and raise questions about the "problem", and about the capacity of the social defense policy to effectively contribute to reducing crime. Even Sapori (deputy secretary from 2003 to 2007) started to publicly challenge the implemented policies and the strategy of police reporting reclassification to award bonuses.¹¹

In an attempt to revive the social defense agenda such as set in 2003, public prosecutor Rômulo Ferraz (2013-2014) was appointed the new Secretary of Social Defense, whose deputy Denilson Feitosa was likewise a public prosecutor. One of their first measures was to hire the João Pinheiro Foundation to devise a new State Plan for Social Defense. At that moment, the secretary signals the possibility of breaking with path dependence in the public safety area, as it had been leading to disintegration in previous years. But the Plan – which had not involved direct participation of either the organized civil society or the wider population – was never put in practice. The alternative found by the secretary and his deputy to gain more support from social leadership – who would at every moment challenge official crime rates – was to increase investments in prevention, which achieved ever greater relevance in the government's agenda.

As it happens, though, the situation was not that easy to revert: the more the secretaries announced new investments in actions such as the *Fica Vivo!* program, the more they were questioned about the substantial increase seen in violent crime.¹² Collegiate meetings got ever rarer and in the end turned into a merely ceremonial event, as the participating institutions no longer were held accountable for any failure to implement the agreed programs. Adding to that was a relentless pressure from the prison system to be turned into a separate office, in view of the 265% growth it experienced from 2003 to 2013 in number of units and prisoners (Oliveira, Ribeiro and Bastos, 2015). With the purpose of meeting such demands, the secretaries opened numerous competitive public-service examinations to hire new penitentiary agents. With this, that professional category went up from numbering 650 individuals in 2003 to 14,151 permanent staff and contractors in 2014 (Idem).

¹⁰In that respect, see: https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/politica/2012/01/20/interna_politica,273364/anastasia-vai-trocar-toda-a-cupula-da-seguranca-publica-de-minas.shtml, accessed on 08 December 2017.

¹¹In that respect, see: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/cotidiano/28731-apos-7-anos-violencia-volta-a-crescer-em-mg.shtml>, accessed on 08 December 2017.

¹²In that respect, see: <https://amp-mg.jusbrasil.com.br/noticias/118307669/romulo-ferraz-anuncia-verba-de-r-70-milhoes-para-expandir-fica-vivo-e-apacs-em-minas>, accessed on 08 December 2017.

It is noteworthy that homicide rates were again publicized in Minas Gerais, with reports informing that, from 2010 to 2014, they had increased by 24.9% (*Mapa da Violência*, 2016: 7). While Social Defense kept responding to the specific interests of each office (police forces, prevention and prison system), the promise to reduce crime was getting more and more rhetoric. In August 2014, Rômulo Ferraz was replaced by Marco Romanelli (2014-2014), state prosecutor, who in his inaugural speech stated that his agenda would be an institutionalization of the new policing model used by the Military Police during World Cup 2014, which had Belo Horizonte as one of its host cities. That buried once and for all the previous model based on integration of police forces, in view of the prominence now given to the Military Police.

With the subsequent state elections, Fernando Pimentel became the new governor (2015-2018). He was a member of PT (Workers' Party), the traditional opposition to PSDB (Brazilian Social Democrat Party). Then, Social Defense underwent yet another sharp course change with the appointment of state representative Bernardo Santana (2015-2016) as the new secretary. Actions would now be focused on meeting the interests of certain sectors of Social Defense (notably the Civil Police) and on fulfilling agreements made with the allied political base so as to secure approval of a newly proposed administrative reform – which would ultimately dismantle SEDS. When Act #22.257 took force on 27 July 2016, the old Public Safety Secretariat (SESP) was (re)created in substitution for SEDS, with little interference in the police forces, which since then have enjoyed growing autonomy from the informational, territorial and (especially) operational points of view.

Another milestone in terms of social defense model discontinuity was the autonomy given to the prison system, with the creation of the State Secretariat of Prison Administration – SEAP, through art. 23 of Act #22.257 of 27 July 2016. From then on, and far from sharing resources or attentions, the prison system became a sort of “crown jewel” and could even count on its own press advisory staff,¹³ always ready to disseminate the office’s initiative and reinforce the message that more people behind bars means more safety, even as official statistics would disprove it.

The crime prevention policy became more autonomous, as the new Undersecretariat of Crime Prevention Policies (SUPEC) was created by Decree #47.088 of 23 November 2016. This agency has as its overall objective “to contribute to the prevention and reduction of violence and crime in defined territories and among groups that are more vulnerable to such phenomena, as well as to an enhanced sense of safety in the State of Minas Gerais” (*Portfólio da Política de Prevenção à Criminalidade*, 2016:9).

It is important to stress that the creation of SESP and SEAP (two secretariats similar to the arrangement existing in 2002) thirteen years after SEDS had been instituted was, if not foreseen, at least to be expected. From the start, the Social Defense model had caused police forces to resent their loss of autonomy. The prison system saw itself as too relevant an area to be subsumed into another office, while the prevention system – a novelty created in 2003 – was strengthened by dynamic communities that were continuously mobilizing to prevent its weakening,¹⁴ thus lending more political visibility to the area.

In sum, we understand that the *Choque de Gestão* was initially successful in public safety due to the persons ahead of Social Defense. The combination of a powerful political figure and a technical expert enabled the good operation of a governance arrangement that achieved some progress in the advancement of four priority action lines. But, this one only last for four years. As from 2007, Social Defense gradually decays into a place of disputes, thus making feasible a return to the prominence previously enjoyed by police forces and prisons. This happens due to a sensitive aspect of public safety, and which perhaps is less pronounced in the other government departments: the fact that the Secretary of Social Defense may be a parliamentarian without technical knowledge tends to weaken and restrain any advancements, particularly with regard to the implementation of a new management model in terms of governance and integration of prevention and repression policies.

We are not claiming, however, that it would suffice to have a Secretary of Social Defense with strong leadership in the government, assisted by a technically

¹³In that respect, see: <http://www.seap.mg.gov.br>, accessed on 10 December 2017.

¹⁴In that respect, see: https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/gerais/2017/09/23/interna_gerais,902878/professores-e-alunos-de-oficinas-protestam-contra-a-suspensao-do-proje.shtml, accessed on 8 December 2017.

knowledgeable deputy, throughout the 13 years analyzed herein, so as to ensure integration and governance to social defense policies, leading to a reduction of violence. Nonetheless, instabilities and political conflicts building up over more than a decade led to a return to the previous trajectory of autonomy for agencies in charge of public safety, with renewed emphasis in its repressive dimension and, still, with the inexistence of collegiate decisions for implementation of crime reduction policies.

In short, the end of the Social Defense model was not a result of a rotation of parties in power, for, when PT assumes the state government after years of PSDB administration, the integration proposed by the Emergency Social Defense Program had already been totally dismantled.

V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of this paper was to reconstitute the public safety policy undertaken in the State of Minas Gerais along 13 years (2003-2016), so as to try and understand the extent to which it suffered with agenda problems and path dependence. But, in order to understand what was going on in one of the states comprising the Brazilian federation, it was first necessary to recall how public safety had been treated along the very process of constitution of that federation.

Given the historical processes that culminated in an absence of a qualified public and conceptual debate on crime causes, problems relating to social inequality, poverty and diversity and/or differences between groups and individuals were often treated as a “public order” issue (Bretas and Rosemberg, 2013). This historical construction of the field has somehow guided the ideas of political actors in the public safety area, thus influencing the *modus operandi* of their institutions even after promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which signals the re-inauguration of democracy in Brazil (Santos, 2015). However, more prominent diagnosis of crime causes had highlighted how the lack of an effective public safety policy contributed to a sharp increase in criminality and in homicide particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, compounded by disorderly urbanization (Beato, 1998).

Minas Gerais looked to innovate in the management of that problem with the institution of the State Secretariat of Social Defense, which created a new model of governance for public safety. With the construction of collegiate decisions, actors comprising

the entire spectrum of social defense could get involved and take part in deliberations pertaining to their demands and needs. This new model that endowed SEDS with the competence to coordinate strategies for crime reduction was highly innovative and relevant in public safety, having been recognized for the advancements it brought about in various institutional dimensions (Beato and Silveira, 2014).

However, the arrangement met with a lot of resistance and entailed much conflict, which ultimately rendered it unviable over time. The integration agenda was incapable of surviving the subsequent political changes, and thus SEDS priorities were in the end captured by the field’s historical problems, such as the incapacity to articulate Military and Civil Police and the use of mass incarceration in response to rising crime, which gave huge prominence to the penitentiary system. The historical course of the deceased SEDS highlights the difficulty in prioritizing the 2003 agenda and consolidating a dense, cohesive public safety policy, being captured by the path dependence trajectory of this sector. This rendered unviable the entire *modus operandi* of integration and the consolidation of new institutional strategies in the area.

The line of argument we have developed herein stresses the way how the rise and death of the Social Defense model in the past thirteen years in Minas Gerais are simultaneously a result of agenda problems and path dependence. Local public safety suffered with the “agenda problems” given the change of political actors, no longer interested in sustaining innovative organizational arrangements or ideas intent to consolidate a public safety model that could depart from the usual perspective of confrontation, surveillance and punishment. The arrangement that is in effect today, in turn, can be seen as a result of path dependence, as the weakening of the innovative proposal led to its destabilization and discontinuity, and to a resumption of guidelines that traditionally characterize actions in the area, namely, bipartition of police functions and increase of prison population in face of rising violent crime. With regard to police forces – main opposition to the Social Defense model –, path dependence can be understood as a result of “bipartition of the police cycle between two institutions with a historically conflictive relationship”, which ends up generating “a lack of collaboration between those responsible for the two stages of treatment of one same object” (Teixeira, 2013: 403).

The last remnant of the 2003 innovations is the prevention policy, which not only still holds but has also grown in visibility and importance. It remains to be seen, however, for how long it will manage to avoid falling prey to political interests, as a reduction in homicide continues to be an unfulfilled promise under the present State Executive administration.

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