

Research Articles

A View from the South: The Global Creation of the War on Drugs

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Abstract: The paper claims that it is necessary to seriously consider facts and phenomena beyond the 'West' in order to understand and theorise the complex social practices that shape the world. From a Latin American standpoint, it questions the traditional approach to a global matter: the War on Drugs. Researchers usually see this phenomenon in Latin America as reflecting US domination in the region. However, by identifying how and why the drug issue became a matter of security in Latin America and by specifying the collective countermeasures adopted, Latin American participation becomes more apparent in the construction of the international process that gave rise to the normative framework that holds up the War on Drugs: the 1988 Vienna Convention.

Keywords: War on Drugs; Global South; International Relations; Latin America; International Political Sociology.

Introduction

The field of International Relations (IR) is admittedly neither international nor relational. On the one hand, its epistemological and empirical fields are anchored in sparse geographical areas of the planet (Cervo 2008). On the other, the practice and construction of IR has been dominated single-handedly by theories and concepts crafted by academic communities located in the United States and Western Europe (Wæver and Tickner 2009). Even so, by making use of the same classic concepts from IR, such provincialism has been questioned in territories different from the West (Tickner and Blaney 2013) and through non-western theory construction (Acharya and Buzan 2009). Criticism and questioning of the field is not only restricted to these places though; it also comes from those same cognitive sources and areas that dominate knowledge production (e.g. Salomon 2013; Tickner 2013). Yet still, I hold that another way to question the practice and theory of IR is through empirical sources and concepts that geographically originate outside Europe and the United States.

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Although researchers have pointed to the existence of different ways of thinking and writing about the ‘international’ (Acharya and Buzan 2009; Tickner and Blaney 2013), the idea of the ‘West’ and the empirical and epistemic processes that take place there are the *loci classici* of analyses that nevertheless promote a field of IR that is more inclusive and encompassing of global phenomena and dynamics. It is indispensable then to reconsider facts and phenomena outside the ‘West’ in order to explain and understand our global reality. In this paper, I claim that a necessary complement to hegemonic interpretations of the world lies in empirically identifying what meaning actors in the ‘global South’ give to their acts. Empirical research on the ‘non-West’ allows us to enlarge our understanding and knowledge of complex social practices that shape the world. By adopting a comprehensive sociology perspective of the international sphere, and from a Latin American standpoint, this paper questions the traditional approach to a global matter: the War on Drugs (from now on the WoD).

Specialised literature considers that the origin of the WoD is to be found in statements emitted and facts and actions carried out by the US government, whose means, meaning, and principles concerning this phenomenon have then spread throughout the world either by imitation or imposition. Centred on the US, this is a literature held up by analytical machinery built out of the axioms and corollaries of classical IR theories. Nevertheless, in order to actually broaden traditional approaches, the WoD should be seen as a more complex and less static phenomenon produced by interrelationships, connections, and interactions. Thus, I propose to define the WoD as a global social process of measures and actions designed and implemented to eliminate the activities of production, trade, and consumption of drugs with no medical or scientific use. In doing so, it becomes possible to decentralise our view away from the United States and hence, confront and understand the role that other actors played in the global creation of the WoD. Thus, my aim is to carry out an observation of the creation of the WoD from a Latin American standpoint based on actions, political statements, diplomatic documents, dates, personages, and political meetings. However, since my analysis is based on a comprehensive sociology approach, it is not simply a matter of stating the facts and actions that evince Latin American participation in the construction of the WoD. Here, it is also a question of enquiring into why Latin Americans took such actions and what their effects were.

That being said, I have no intention of evaluating drug policy in Latin America. Nor do I underestimate its asymmetric relations with the United States or their diverging interests with respect to drug policy. I also do not want to overlook the fact that the United States has structural resources allowing it to defend or impose – depending on the interpretation – and develop its policies within a global scenario. And least of all do I seek to minimise coercion used in US drug-related foreign policy. I find that the literature dedicated to these topics is profuse enough already. In this paper, I claim that Latin America has been a key player in the creation of international regulations, which aim to both punish and eliminate the use of narcotics and psychotropic substances with no medical or scientific purpose. My focus is on understanding – through concrete and, hence, empirical events – the role that Latin American activism has played in giving shape to none other than the international treaty that encapsulates the international norms and principles steering ac-

tions towards eliminating the non-scientific and non-medical use of drugs, i.e., the United Nations Convention against illicit traffic in narcotics and psychotropic substances, signed in Vienna in 1988.

First, I put forward the argument that when it comes down to explaining the WoD in Latin America, the conventional interpretation that revolves around the United States is almost always uncritically and indiscriminately accepted. Next, I identify the contribution made by Latin America towards defining drugs as a global security issue. Then, I show the effects of Latin American diplomacy in the drafting of the Vienna Convention. I conclude by stressing that the standard version of the WoD in Latin America, as focused on US actions, should not only be challenged from an epistemological point of view, but is in itself politically counterproductive.

The standard version of the WoD

For internationalists and the general public, both US prohibitionism and US actions abroad, which were aimed at casting it and spreading it around the world, are recurring factors used to explain the meaning and origin of the WoD. The United States has been a central player in the progressive creation of global prohibition norms (Nadelmann 1990). Most notably and since the 1970s, global norms regulating drugs have been configured around the negative impact of US preferences on ‘non-Western countries’ (Bewley-Taylor 2001: 174). This research, based on historical approaches and copious empirical data, has been particularly devoted to studying the way the United States has internationalised some of its criminal law (Nadelmann 1990; Bewley-Taylor 2003), as well as its role in global drug control through policy (Bewley-Taylor 2001). High doses of realism have produced claims of police control in the global scenario – where the fight against drugs is paradigmatic – as being determined by ‘the interests and agendas of those states best able to coerce and co-opt others’ (Andreas and Nadelmann 2006: 9). However, just because the United States is a dominant actor does not mean that it is the only actor *per se* involved in determining the international definition of the drug problem and in defining any possible countermeasures.

The process of creating mechanisms and agencies that provide global support to the WoD first appeared within the framework of the League of Nations, and later within United Nations forums (Brunn, Pan and Rexed 1975; Bentham 1998; Dudouet 1999; McAlister 2000). It is worthy of note that this process has not been solely guided by states. The participation of pharmaceutical industries has been essential for distinguishing between licit and illicit use of drugs (Bensussan 1946; Bayer and Ghodse 1999; Sheptycki 2000), as well as for regulating their use (Dudouet 2003). And still, academic debates and public discussion continue to ignore the participation of those and other actors. Hence, they uphold a simplistic and flat representation of the global space, whose normative structure ought not to have any relation either with ‘Southern’ or ‘non-Western’ states or with whatever happens there. Bibliographic and empirical sources used in the standard explanation about the global origins of the WoD fail to provide an account of processes, interactions, or inter-national negotiations. Instead, they merely account for the foreign policy, national

standards, value perceptions, and historical processes designated as related to the drug problem in the United States. The facts that show the participation of other actors are disregarded. Thus, it is US action in the matter that mainly feeds conceptualisations and explanations of the WoD.

In the previous narrative, the origin of the drug problem in Latin America and the policies put forward to counter it would then be nothing more than an emulation or an effect of the United States declaring WoD, dated by some authors back to 1971 (Gaviria Uribe and Mejía 2011: 1) and by others to the 1980s (Andreas and Nadelmann 2006: 106). Latin American academics in IR have made claims lacking historical or empirical evidence saying, 'in the 1990s, the prohibition model underlying that [global anti-drug] regime [with US trademark] was undertaken *de facto* by United Nations agencies' and 'assimilated by Latin America' (Tokatlian 2010a: 387–388). These statements resonate with similar interpretations given by politicians (Samper 2013), government officials (Lopes da Silva 2013), and journalists who call Latin American countries a front to the WoD, whose 'headquarters' are presumably located in Washington (Naim 2006). Little interest has been focused on the role played by Latin American countries in defining the global drug problem and in finding its solutions. According to IR analysts, those countries are either assumed to be deprived of willpower or have negligible margins of autonomy. The consensus would be that they are assumed to be inevitably subject to US internal or external interest and policy.

Researchers have argued that the policies of the WoD in Latin America are 'a renewed expression of American neo-colonialism' (Fortmann, Aureano and Lopez 1997: 720). These are functional policies for relations with the United States (Soberón 2015). As such, regardless that Latin American governments define 'narcotrafic' as a matter of national security, the fact that the United States had already done as much with the illicit entry of narcotics is what led Latin American countries to 'securitising the manner of treating the phenomenon at the risk of having the country itself, more than the illicit business, be converted into a US national security threat and into an excuse for acts of force [by the United States]' (Tokatlian 1999: 73). Similarly, some countries in Latin America have drawn up 'public policies where the repressive model is imposed from the outside' (Dabène 1996: 3), while in the Andean region, drugs constitute a trans-regional problem to be tackled following the mandates of US security policy (Tickner and Mason 2003). It is considered that there is little or no regional inter-state co-operation, although an alleged compliance between Latin America and the United States is often highlighted. Researchers in IR have argued that Andean governments adopt reactive policies preventing institutional mechanisms from being processed to provide a space for co-operative security (Bonilla 2006: 107). Through prescriptive reasoning, it is claimed that there is no co-operative behaviour when it comes to narcotrafic in Andean countries (Tokatlian 2011: 118). The conclusion is then that, in the Andes, policy is subject to external pressures, while the Andean regional approach against the illegal trafficking of narcotics is ignored (Ayuso 2008: 297).

Underlying these interpretations, of course, is a Realist representation of the global space. But similar explanations have also been crafted out of conceptual presuppositions of complex interdependence and co-operation. Their analytical principles are American

hegemony, Latin American vulnerability/sensibility, and asymmetry as explanatory factors for United States–Latin America relations (Bonilla 2006). Others include secondary states (Latin American) and a hegemonic actor (the United States) who pushes others towards implementing the rules of the ‘international drug prohibition regime’ (González 1996; Bentham 1998), or threatens either with punishment or the use of force (Leal and Tokatlian 1994). Scholars in such matters resort to creative argumentative tricks and linguistic gimmicks to claim, ‘When addressing the topic of U.S. hegemony it is important to conceptually delimit the dimensions of “global” and “regional” [because] [e]ven if a gradual international US “de-hegemonisation” is taking place [...] an evident US “re-hegemonisation” is also taking place in Latin America and the Caribbean’ (Tokatlian 1997: 67). Besides Realism and Liberalism, there are also some analyses from Constructivist perspectives. Even so, by focusing on speeches and utterances emitted in the United States, these perspectives wind up simply highlighting its dominance (Borda 2002; Guáqueta 2006; García Pinzón 2011).

This specialised field of studies has left countless clichés about Latin America and the WoD untouched. From within Latin America, as well as outside it, a cartoonish image of the WoD is produced and reproduced, whereby the American ‘stick’ and the European ‘carrot’ are what determine the action of Latin American countries (Tokatlian 2011; Fukumi 2016). These types of interpretations assign a passive and/or a never-ending subordinate role to Latin America in the presence of foreign actors who are explicitly or tacitly identified as the ‘West’ or the ‘North’ – both of which are composed exclusively of Western Europe and the United States. Analyses of the drug phenomenon in Latin America do little to address the participation of Latin American countries in the global construction of norms guiding policies against non-scientific and non-medical use of narcotics and psychotropics. But they strongly uphold that the supposed difficulties and risks would imply for those countries a change to that normativity (Jelsma and Thoumi 2008; Thoumi 2009; Soberón Garrido 2013) or highlight the US drive to establish the WoD in Latin America (Labate and Rodrigues 2015). Emphasis has been placed on the idea that the implementation of policies to combat drugs in Latin American countries is tied to US policy whims (Fortmann, Aureano and Lopez 1997; Tickner 2007; Borda 2011; Ponce 2016). And yet, little is known about the regional Latin American context that gave rise to the drug problem,¹ and much less about how it came up with a Latin American collective action to combat it.

To understand the WoD and its implications for Latin America, or for the countries that make it up, seems, at a first glance, to leave us with no other choice but to take up an exclusively American approach (Lee 2004; Dammert 2009; Tokatlian 2010; Morales and de Lyra 2015). In effect, studies on drugs in Latin America and its member countries are based on a presupposition perceived as central to global politics and strongly embedded in the dominant perspectives of IR, i.e., the predominance of one actor (or some actors) – generally from the North or ‘West’ – over other(s), which are more often than not, from the South. Even when the focus is on bilateral relations or co-operation between the United States and Latin America in the fight against drugs is the object of study, the analytical point of departure is not the interactions, conflicts, practices, consensus, transactions, or

growing mutual interdependence processes. Instead, the point of departure is either the United States (Tickner 2001; Tickner and Cepeda 2011) or the analytical perspective that presupposes the existence of rational actors – usually states – globally linked to each other through exclusively vertical relations of power (Gusmão 2015; Soberón 2015). This means that not accepting the dominant version of the WoD enlarges the range of exploration and analysis on how the drug problem took shape in Latin America, as well as the meaning behind the collective counteractions taken in the region immediately after.

How drugs became a problem in Latin America

The global regulation of the use of opium, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin began at the dawn of the 20th century. During this time, the initial objective of controlling the international opium trade – and then morphine, heroin, and cocaine (Lowes 1966) – was replaced with internationally controlling its manufacture and, later, its agricultural production (Bentham 1998). International transactions, which states, international bureaus, and pharmaceutical companies attended, defined a legal space for these products that limited them to scientific and medical uses (Dudouet 1999). These processes of control and regulation, highly referenced in the literature, reached three key milestones in the second half of the 20th century. The first was in 1961, with the unification of conventions, agreements, and protocols produced in the first half of the century. Then, the second in 1971 came with the inclusion of psychotropic substances for international control. And the third was reached in 1988, with the protection of the legal drug space through the criminalisation and removal of all non-scientific or medical uses.

In Latin America researchers have shed light on the already problematic existence of different uses of coca and marihuana even before the 1971 and 1980 US declarations of WoD (Sáenz 2007, 2009; Fernandez Labbé 2009; Enciso 2015; López Restrepo 2016). Latin American participation during the 20th century in the configuration of the global control over the legal use of drugs has also been mentioned (Lopes da Silva 2013). However, how and why drugs became a security issue in Latin America itself has not been a topic of interest.

Non-medical or scientific uses of coca and cocaine become a matter of security for Latin America in the 1980s. At that time, the region had an impact on the definition of the normative bedrock that acts as a global support to the WoD. In 1986, Ronald Reagan, during his term in US government (1980–1988), had signed National Security Decision Directive No. 221, on narcotics and national security. This decision has been traditionally thought of as *the* foundational piece of the characterisation of drugs as a security issue in Latin America (Walker III 1999; Tokatlían 2010b; Rodrigues 2012; Rodrigues and Labate 2015, Rodrigues, Cavnar and Labate 2016). The fact is, though, that South American governments had already defined ‘narcotraffic’ as a security threat two years earlier in a context of social and political upheaval. More specifically, in Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru, the activities and benefits of illicit production and commercialisation of cocaine had exacerbated economic, social, and political conflicts and tensions.

In 1984, the 'Sendero Luminoso' (Shining Path) guerrilla group was set up in the Huallaga valley, where the Peruvian government of Fernando Belaúnde (1980–1985) had initiated elimination and replacement programmes for illegal coca crops with US aid for rural development and police force support (Ponce 2016: 132). Guerrilla terrorist acts moved quickly to target the police. The military launched the attack on *senderista* focal points, while also busy dealing with disappearances and the discovery of mass graves. 'Anti-drug' government programmes were carried out under the crossfire of guerrilla territorial control and military operations (Reid 1989). In 1982, Bolivia had reverted back to a democracy immediately after a military regime that was linked to both far-right groups and illegal activities related to producing and commercialising cocaine. Civic associations of the Chapare area held protests and demonstrations against government policy. As a result, the violence caused by state force officers, the resistance to constraints on illegal coca crops, the confrontation between criminal groups engaged in producing and trading cocaine not destined for scientific or medical uses, and the formation of armed groups sponsored by smugglers, the military, and far-right groups generated a delicate political and social instability in Bolivia. Moreover, it was hard not to notice the profits peasants were reaping from growing unauthorised coca crops during an economic collapse that wreaked havoc during the early 1980s following the return to democracy (Lehmann 2006).

In south-eastern Colombia, intensive coca crop cultivation for unauthorised uses began in the late 1980s in between simultaneous processes of colonisation, land conflicts, environmental problems, and insurgent movements (Jaramillo, Mora and Cubides 1986). The dynamics of coalescing private counter-insurgency groups with drug dealers shaped paramilitarism and the agrarian counter-reform (Reyes and Bejarano 1998). It was a period characterised by violence, growing repression, and conflicting measures (Uprimny and Guzman 2016: 90). In Colombia, as in Peru and Bolivia, the economy was steeped in 'narco-dollars', which encouraged smuggling and in turn altered exchange, import, and industry rates (Thoumi 2003: 141–263). In Peru and Colombia, thanks to their ties to illicit cocaine production and trafficking, insurgent movements also obtained certain political gains (Felbab-Brown 2009). But the novelty of the phenomenon in Colombia was the direct attack on the state by organisations composed of illicit cocaine producers and smugglers. On 30 April 1984, after numerous threats from alleged 'drug cartels', the minister of justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was found murdered. Immediately after, President Belisario Betancur (1982–1986) declared 'war on narcotraffic' and approved extradition for those convicted of illegal trafficking of narcotics. His minister of foreign relations asked the United States for 'practical help' and an 'effective co-operation to combat illicit drug trafficking' (Semana 1984). Then, Betancur himself visited his counterpart in Washington, where, in addition to seeking funds from private banks and multilateral agencies, he made statements in the media and the Senate claiming that the 'drug problem' was due to 'cocaine use in the United States' (Semana 1985). Following this, Betancur and Reagan issued a joint statement that introduced the elimination of both the illicit production and the illicit demand for drugs into the dynamic of their bilateral relations (Reagan and Betancur 1988: 399–400).

As seen above, in the first half of the 1980s, the production and trafficking of cocaine with no scientific or medical uses came to the fore as an internal threat in Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia. Representatives from these countries launched political initiatives at the international level to find support for dealing with illicit drug trafficking. In 1981, Bolivia addressed a request to the UN asking to include the item 'International campaign against drug trafficking' in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (Permanent Representative of Bolivia 1981). In the following years, a broader set of Latin American countries had a hand in the drafting of the Vienna Convention through various conferences, diplomatic mechanisms, and a political defence of interpretations of shared responsibility to tackle the drug problem. On 11 August 1984, in conjunction with Leon Febres Cordero taking office as President of Ecuador (1984–1988), the presidents Hernán Siles Suazo (1982–1985), Belisario Betancur (1982–1986) and Jaime Lusinchi (1984–1989), of Bolivia, Colombia, and Venezuela, respectively, along with government representatives from Peru, Nicaragua, and Panama, signed a declaration in Quito denouncing illicit drug trafficking as a threat to the economy, society, and the state. This document was sent to the UN Secretary-General, Peruvian diplomat Javier Pérez de Cuellar, to make a pitch for declaring illicit drug trafficking as a 'crime against humanity' and pushing for the creation of a global or regional fund for development aid so that those countries affected could combat illicit drug trafficking. In the eyes of those that signed the declaration, illicit drug trafficking was intimately linked to shortcomings in socio-economic development (UN 1984b). During the 1980s in Latin America, the drug problem emerged directly linked to security issues. Simultaneously, in addition to the repressive actions taken by the state to tackle it, a request for international financial aid was filed in order to address the security problem of violence against political institutions that cut through both social and economic spheres.

Latin American participation in shaping the 1988 Vienna Convention

The Quito Declaration was supplemented by another document against the illegal trafficking and use of narcotics written up in New York during October 1984 by the ministers of foreign relations from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, as well as an Argentine diplomat. This new Latin American declaration, also sent to the UN Secretary-General, reiterated the objectives announced in Quito and proposed to undertake a specialised UN conference to adopt an international plan of action against illicit drug trafficking. In addition, diplomats who signed this new document stressed the need to create a global financial fund to aid in 'the fight against drug trafficking at the economic, social and political level' (UN 1984a). This was a fund different from the United Nations Fund established in 1971 to fight drug abuse. Regrettably, these efforts from Latin American representatives were quickly stripped of any autonomous and propositional power whatsoever. Analyses explained that it was merely limited rhetoric (Bonilla 1991: 24) and interpret these actions as Latin American governments simply complementing US policy (Del Olmo 1991: 104–105).²

The Quito and New York declarations do contain a political value, insofar as they were a means to achieve certain objectives. Not only did the drafting of each declaration imply

concerted intergovernmental action in Latin America, but it also implied diplomatic activism and political interactions, both of which then supported, promoted, and crystallised them into concrete results. In December of 1984, based on the Latin American Declarations in Quito and New York, UNGA adopted three resolutions relating to the creation of a new 'convention against the illegal trafficking of narcotics that takes different aspects of the problem into consideration' (UNGA 1984a, 1984b, 1984c). The resolutions explicitly noted the objectives and suggestions declared by Latin Americans in Quito and New York as carriers of the decisions taken therein. In those resolutions, The UNGA specifically retook Latin America's proposals to classify 'illicit trafficking as a serious crime against humanity' and create a financial aid fund to combat it (UNGA 1984a). Therefore, Latin American countries did participate in the process which simultaneously criminalised the use, sale, and marketing of narcotics without scientific or medical use, and strengthened the institutionalisation of countermeasures.

The proposal of Latin American governments to convene an international conference on the various aspects of the drug problem was, in effect, adopted as an UNGA Resolution on December 13, 1985 (UNGA 1985). Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar took care of the formal invitations to convene the corresponding conference, which took place in Vienna from 17 to 26 June 1987 with the participation of delegations from 138 countries (El País 1987). At this conference, a treaty was discussed and drawn up then adopted in the same city a year later. The 1988 Convention later guaranteed that actions of repression would be taken up against the supply of narcotics with no medical or scientific purpose. In the preamble, its authors set in writing on the one hand, the link between 'illicit trafficking and other organized criminal activities associated with it, which undermine licit economies and threaten the stability, security and sovereignty of states', and on the other, the affirmation that unauthorised traffic of narcotics 'as an international criminal activity whose elimination requires urgent attention and the highest priority' (UN 1988). International actions taken up against drugs were thereafter embedded in the area of state security, taking up the previous Latin American and US positions announced in 1984 and 1986, respectively.

In that regard, when the 1986 National Security Decision Directive No. 221 called up 'development aid' and 'producing countries' in the same sentence, so to speak, it indicated that Reagan's stance was a response to suggestions made by Latin Americans from Quito and New York two years earlier. In its decision, the US government had also warned that at any rate, 'the threat posed by illicit trafficking to national security is significantly more serious beyond U.S. borders,' and in particular, where rebels and terrorists had connections with drug dealers (Reagan 1986). Meaning that, while in Latin America the drug problem emerged as an internal threat to the state, the society, and the economy, the United States declared drugs as an external threat to its citizens. In summary, the emphasis on drugs as a security issue was not only a point connecting US and Latin American countries, but was also introduced into the Vienna Convention and supported by both US and Latin American interpretations. That is to say, even if this Convention adopted approaches, standards, and mechanisms borrowed from US law,³ it also adopted Latin America's interpretation of

the drug problem, mechanisms suggested by them, and the meaning that Latin American governments gave to the actions they deemed necessary to combat it. In other words, understanding the participation of Latin Americans in the shaping of the 1988 Vienna Convention allows us to better understand how and why the issue of drugs was raised as a matter of global security. Prior to the 1988 United Nations Convention there was no international convention that would commit states to co-operating on cracking down on the illicit traffic of narcotics and psychotropic substances.

Latin American activism before and after Vienna

The UN's only convention on narcotics in 1961 had pointed to the need to protect 'the health and welfare of mankind' and particularly, of the individual (UN 1961). Then, in 1971, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances added the 'concern [that] the public health and social problem resulting from abuse of certain psychotropic substances [caused]' to the list (UN 1971). The United Nations convention against the illicit traffic of narcotics and psychotropic substances, held in 1988, included the interpretation that the production, trafficking, and consumption of narcotics without medical or scientific use constituted a state security problem. Accordingly, participants in the 1988 Convention agreed that the new international treaty should aim to eliminate the illicit use of narcotics and agreed to inter-state co-operation to that end. In the interactions that preceded that international agreement, Latin Americans played a leading role. Moreover, after Vienna, countries from the Andes placed co-responsibility and foreign assistance as imperative principles to eliminate illicit drug use in their territories.

During the multilateral negotiations of 1987, before the UN's adoption of the 1988 Convention, the majority of the delegations of the participating countries advocated reducing illicit supply – that is, supply not destined for pharmaceutical markets. Simultaneously, delegations of countries where the producers and dealers of cocaine for non-scientific or medical use congregated pushed to criminalise the unauthorised consumption of narcotics and psychotropic substances in order to 'balance out responsibilities' (Boister 2003). In Vienna, discussions on the creation of a new international treaty on drugs revolved around two positions. On the one side, countries with a large concentration of illicit coca-growers defended the idea that 'if there's production it is because there is consumption'.⁴ On the other, the United States and European countries argued that, 'the responsibility lies in the producing countries and the solution lies on the side of crop elimination'. Negotiation and discussions between these two sides ended up with two distinctions. The first was the notion of 'shared responsibility' and the other, the use of the term 'illicit trafficking', which pointed to an amalgam of uses (production, consumption, sale, distribution, manufacture, possession, storage, etc.) with no medical or scientific purpose (Rouchereau 1988).⁵

Nevertheless, in the eyes of Latin Americans, the causes that gave rise to the increase in coca crops for non-medical or scientific use during the 1980s could not be simply traced back to the illegal demand for cocaine coming from the United States and Europe. The increase in these crops was also linked to issues related to the socio-economic development

of rural areas. This interpretation, which had been put down on paper in the Quito and New York declarations and which located the emergence of illicit crops in areas with low levels of socio-economic development and poor infrastructure, was added to the multilateral norms. With regard to the elimination of illicit crops, the Vienna Convention stressed three points: (1) the importance of international co-operation to supporting integrated rural development aimed at providing alternatives that were both economically viable and took into account factors such as access to markets, the availability of resources, and socio-economic conditions; (2) inter-state exchange of technical and scientific information and research relating to how to eliminate drug use; and (3) inter-state co-operation for possible illicit crops grown in border areas (UN 1988: 14). The 1988 Convention criminalised illicit trafficking of narcotics so that the elimination of illicit crops remained strongly articulated to the panoply of instruments for international co-operation and development aid.⁶ However, Latin American activism in the criminalisation of illicit use, the definition of the drug problem as a security issue, and the endorsement of repressive measures, along with the request for international economic and financial co-operation in order to counter it were most certainly not limited to the UN.

In 1989, Bolivian President Jaime Paz Zamora (1989–1993) launched his ‘development for coca’ policy focused on ending illicit coca cultivation through economic changes. His government followed a course of ‘coca diplomacy’ (Grisaffi 2016: 154) and insisted that ‘industrialised countries’ should create a financial fund ‘aimed at carrying out comprehensive actions to eliminate production, trafficking and consumption of narcotics’ (Morales 1992). That same year in Bogotá, Virgilio Barco’s government (1986–1990) made his Special Co-operation Plan (*Plan Especial de Cooperación*) known to European embassies, and UN and US development aid agencies. In this plan, he asked for unilateral trade preferences, as well as technical and financial assistance, in order to invest in strengthening the Colombian economy, defending democracy, and eliminating illicit crops. Similar to his Bolivian counterpart, President Barco’s main argument was that supporting his programme would offset the negative social and economic impacts that combating illicit drug trafficking represented for Colombia. In addition, the Barco administration noted that faced with ‘a global problem that Colombia had not created’, the requested co-operation demanded their responsibility (Thoumi 2003: 338–351). Parallel to this, Paz and Barco reiterated their absolute commitment to standing by repressive measures and actions to fight against drugs. But their decision, as illustrated by the Colombian case, cannot be simply understood as a response to foreign pressure to militarise the fight against drugs, or even as being a copy of US policy.

In November of 1987, a year prior to signing the Vienna Convention, an US proposal to create a multilateral force to combat drugs had been rejected by all Latin American armies, with the exception of Chile (Malamud-Goti 1994). George H W Bush (1988–1992) decided in his 1989 National Drug Strategy to nonetheless grant more military and police assistance to the Andean countries. The offer was rejected by Latin America (Bagley and Castro 1991). The Andean governments stressed the need for multilateral co-operation funds in order to strengthen the state and thus provide economic alternatives to farmers engaged in the cultivation of coca for non-medicinal or scientific uses.

But the indiscriminate use of violence by illicit drug-trafficking groups changed the whole scenario. In August 1989, the 'Medellín cartel' ordered the assassination of a presidential candidate in Bogotá, and two months after that, the explosion of a plane that killed 101 people. Under this 'narco-terrorist' context, the Colombian government unequivocally accepted US aid in military weaponry, even though they had originally requested police equipment. The Peruvian and Bolivian governments accepted financial aid for military and police operations despite having requested assistance for economic development and trade (Bagley and Castro 1991: 33). Apart from that, the United States insisted on supporting Latin American policy in the fight against drugs with military assistance and by yet again instrumentalising drugs in its foreign policy. Then, on 20 December 1989, US troops bombed Panama City to capture Manuel Antonio Noriega, take him before a US judge, and prosecute him for illicit trafficking of cocaine.

Two months after the invasion of Panama, on 15 February 1990, the Colombian government invited the presidents of the United States, Bolivia, and Peru to Cartagena. The multilateral meeting reconciled the US position (which intended to create a joint task force with the Latin Americans to fight against drugs) with the Andean position (which was based on the demand for financial aid and economic co-operation to fight the WoD). In Cartagena, President George H W Bush acknowledged that reducing the illicit use of cocaine in his country was a key element 'to combat drugs'. Furthermore, he pledged to create trade preferences for the Andean markets in his country and to find funds for rural and socio-economic development programmes aimed at areas where unauthorised coca crops were being grown. For their part, Latin American presidents accepted the option of armed intervention 'in the repression of illicit drugs'. This conclusion was reached alongside the United States in the Cartagena Declaration (Declaración de Cartagena 1990), and immediately promoted in Europe. On 4 April 1990, the Colombian president submitted to the European communitarian institutions his Special Plan for Cooperation under the principle of shared responsibility. He also requested aid for crop substitution in Bolivia and Peru and invited Europeans to adopt the co-operation initiatives agreed upon in Cartagena (Barco 1990). The Bolivian President also travelled to Brussels on 9 November of that same year to request, under the logic of shared responsibility, the support of the European Community for his alternative development programme (Paz 1990).

The early 1990s were witness to the cementing of a widespread logic that was defended by Latin Americans and centred on the idea that shared responsibility, economic co-operation, and financial aid to strengthen institutions and open markets were essential to avoid the illegal production and commercialisation of drugs. Since the beginning of the 1990s, it was the Andean countries that brought forth to Europe and the United States successful foreign policies seeking resources for the WoD. Among their most noteworthy achievements between 1990 and 2005 were trade preferences in US and European markets earned on behalf of their fight against drugs.

In actuality, the multilateral agreement reached in Cartagena by the leaders of Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, and the United States was also promoted outside the Americas. In April 1990, the Inter-American Commission for Drug Abuse Control endorsed the objectives of the Cartagena Declaration (CICAD 1990). Two years later, the presidents of Colombia,

Bolivia, Peru, and the United States met in San Antonio (Texas, USA) with their counterparts from Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela. These seven leaders confirmed their commitment to the objectives of the Cartagena Declaration and agreed to have a group of senior officials visit America, Europe, and Japan and to invite them to participate in co-operation strategies in the fight against drugs (San Antonio Drug Summit 1992). Moreover, during the 1990s, a new UN meeting on drugs was mobilised from within Latin America, and it has become one of the spaces where global discussions in such matters are currently structured.

Less than a year after the signing of the Vienna Convention and a month after the assassination of a presidential candidate, Colombia denounced “drugs” as ‘a challenge to the international community’ and recommended to the UNGA to convene a special meeting to discuss ‘all aspects of the drug problem’ (Barco 1989). At the 1992 UNGA, Colombia insisted again upon a new ‘international conference on the problem of illicit drugs’ (Gaviria 1992). This request, taken up the following year by the Mexican government and its strong diplomatic service (Permanent Representative of Mexico 1993), was crystallised in 1998 with the realisation of the UNGA Special Session on the ‘global drug problem’. From this special meeting emerged a declaration and a plan of action that added the principles of shared responsibility and alternative development to multilateral norms, the latter understood as programmes for socio-economic areas where illicit crops were grown (UNGA 1998). The second UNGA session took place in 2008 with the aim of assessing actions taken up against drugs during the previous 10 years; the next meeting was left for 2019. However, in 2012, the presidents of Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico urged UNGA to conduct an international conference on ‘drug policy reform’. But, once again, it was the muscle of Mexican diplomacy that ensured that UNGA would include a call for a world summit on drug policy in 2016 (UNGA 2012) within the framework of ‘international co-operation to battle the global drug problem’. This framework was a thematic successor to the ‘international campaign against illicit drug trafficking’ introduced at UNGA in 1981, as had been requested by Bolivia (Permanent Representative of Bolivia 1981). In short, the point is that both before and after the Vienna Convention, Latin Americans have been first-rate actors in shaping the international normative framework holding up the set of policies that constitute the global WoD.

Conclusion

The empirical observation of the emergence of the drug problem in Latin America and the follow-up diplomatic, governmental, and political actions undertaken by representatives of Latin American countries to counter it do more than offer new knowledge about the global creation of the WoD. It also allows us to affirm that, as a global phenomenon, the WoD – or the fight against drugs, depending on semantic preference – should not only be understood based on US action and policy. This paper confronts a myth that is rampant within the field of IR, the myth that treats phenomena and processes within Europe and/or the United States as the singular material used to approach, explain, understand, and theorise global problems and dynamics. The interpretations that point to a subordination

of Latin America to the United States in the fight against drugs require careful analyses of social practices that shape the international sphere. On the world stage, Latin American governments have had a role in the definition of drugs as a problem of security and the creation of global norms and principles that aim to penalise and to suppress the non-medical or scientific uses of narcotics.

Building from academic and research speeches and realities, where apparently only the United States has the power and capacity of action while other countries are inevitable subjects, only adds to minimising the interests of these countries and to ignoring their practices, interpretations of reality, and their capacity to change it, i.e., it only adds to ignoring their *agency*, to say it in a more sophisticated manner. The US interpretation – widely circulated as the crux to defining the problem and its solutions, to defining Latin America as the subordinated periphery of the origin of the problem, and finally, to defining the means of confronting the problem – in fact, distorts the conception and implementation of public policy against drugs. In the same vein, this type of interpretation obstructs the knowledge and understanding of the global space as well as the practices and actors that compose it.

The global phenomenon of the WoD is not exempt from being explained and understood from a Latin American standpoint. But this, of course, does not mean that a reading from the South/periphery/non-West is to be superimposed upon the North/centre/West. It is really about highlighting the need to overcome dichotomous representations of the world — as well as the imaginary concepts, trials, and cognitive traps that such dichotomies mobilise — in order to understand the world as a space of social practices involving multiple and diverse actors. This approach is useful because, in my opinion, it avoids the marginalisation, ignorance and/or skewing of relationships, practices, events, and actions located in the South/periphery/non-West, hence, enriching the analysis with substantive exploration. And at the same time, it makes a more relevant and less limited knowledge of the world possible, leaving us with a more inclusive and comprehensive field of studies in IR.

If Latin American countries require more analyses and research that includes their history, national policies, foreign policies, and perceptions related to the overall construction of the WoD, the range of studies relating to the field of IR in turn requires more empirical research on the social practices of the (now) designated global South in world affairs.

Notes

- 1 About the drug issue in Latin American national contexts see, among others, Encizo (2015), Fernández (2009), López (2016), and Sáenz (2007, 2009). Also Labate and Rodrigues's books (2015, 2016), which assume a framework of analysis that considers national policies on drugs as a composition of several interfering issues (criminology, foreign actors, security matters, social and cultural practices, medical interests, public safety, etc.)
- 2 These types of interpretations are rampant even in the Latin American academic sphere. In a Latin American scientific journal, where I presented another version of this study, an anonymous evaluator did not approve its publication. One of his arguments was that I 'consider the diplomatic actions of Latin

Americans as real *when in reality we all know that they are not* (emphasis mine).

- 3 David Stewart, Assistant Legal Adviser for the US Department of State and member of the US delegation sent to the 1987 International Conference in Vienna, claimed that his country actively participated in the negotiations of the Convention, and several of its clauses reflect approaches and legal mechanisms already present in US regulations (Stewart 1989).
- 4 Other Latin American countries also took a stance. Central and South Americans lobbied for the control of precursor chemicals, while Mexico, which was specially affected by the illicit cocaine trade, pushed without success to have article two express the compliance of the Convention 'to the rule of domestic law of the [signing] parties' (Rouchereau 1988: 602–603).
- 5 It would be wrong, however, to weld a relentless opposition of discussions and tensions between the positions of 'producer' and 'consumer' countries into one. In fact, joint US and Latin American action created the Inter-American Commission for Drug Abuse (CICAD) in 1986.
- 6 Of course, financial and technical aid had been handed out in the 1970s, when the United States promised support and assistance to countries where illicit production and illicit trafficking occurred (Guáqueta 2006: 299–300). But this aid, granted in return for the commitment of some governments to attack illicit production and trafficking, was a bilateral relation. It was the time of the dismantling of the French Connection that targeted Turkey in particular (Friesendorf 2007: 37–78).

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Um Olhar do Sul: a Criação Global da Guerra às Drogas

Resumo: O artigo argumenta que, para entender e teorizar as complexas práticas sociais que moldam o mundo, é necessário considerar seriamente fatos e fenômenos para além do "Oeste". A partir de um olhar latino-americano, o autor questiona a abordagem tradicional do tema global da Guerra às Drogas, cuja ocorrência na América Latina é, em geral, visto pelos pesquisadores como reflexo da dominação dos Estados Unidos na região. Ao identificar como e por que a questão das drogas tornou-se uma questão de segurança na América Latina e ao especificar as contra-medidas coletivas adotadas na região, o autor revela uma participação latino-americana mais ativa na construção do processo internacional que deu origem ao quadro normativo que mantém a Guerra às Drogas: a Convenção de Viena de 1988.

Palavras-chave: Guerra às Drogas; Sul Global; Relações Internacionais; América Latina; Sociologia Política Internacional.

Received on 24 August 2016, and approved for publication on 13 June 2017.

ERRATUM

On page 644, **where it reads:**

“This conclusion was reached alongside the United States in the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (1990), and immediately promoted in Europe.”

Should read:

“This conclusion was reached alongside the United States in the Cartagena Declaration (Declaración de Cartagena 1990), and immediately promoted in Europe.”

On page 648, **where it reads:**

“Dammert, Lucía. 2009. ‘Drogas e inseguridad en América Latina: una relación compleja’. Nueva Sociedad, (222): 112–131.

Del Olmo, Rosa. 1991. ‘La internacionalización jurídica de la droga’. Nueva Sociedad, (112): 102–14.”

Should read:

“Dammert, Lucía. 2009. ‘Drogas e inseguridad en América Latina: una relación compleja’. Nueva Sociedad, (222): 112–131.

Declaración de Cartagena. 1990. At https://appsciso.uniandes.edu.co/pfaciso/colinter/view_s.php/60/index.php?id=60 [Accessed on 3 July 2017].

Del Olmo, Rosa. 1991. ‘La internacionalización jurídica de la droga’. Nueva Sociedad, (112): 102–14.”

Contexto Internacional (2018) 40(1): 194-194.



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