

Mothers, Warriors and Lords: Gender(ed) Cartographies of the US War on Drugs in Latin America

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Abstract: This paper aims to offer a feminist, Latin-American reading on the gender representations that constitute the discourse on the US war on drugs in Latin America. Drawing upon the feminist literature on international security, this article explores some of the nuances of the US war-on-drugs discourse when it comes to gender. It argues that, although a gendered discourse has been constantly present in US official discourse, it has visibly changed in character as the USA's antidrug policies became increasingly internationalized, militarized, and oriented by a 'supply-side approach.' Once deployed through the feminization of drug consumption as a moral degradation of the nation's social body, US war-on-drugs discourse perceptibly changed to encompass a process of hyper-masculinization of the figure of the US *drug warrior*, supported by subordinate masculinities and femininities represented by the subaltern, feminized Latin American *drug warriors*, and the ruthless, hyper-aggressive *drug lords*. Ultimately, the gender(ed) cartographies of the USA's war-on-drugs discourse work as conditions of possibility for framing the war on drugs as the only 'solution' to the 'drug problem' and reaffirm the incessant search for sovereignty that has as its ultimate goal the total control, domination and vigilance of human interaction with psychoactive substances: attributes of a hegemonic state masculinity *par excellence*. Through gendered (in)security performances, the state defends not only its 'physical' borders from external threats, but also its own frontiers of possibility.

Key words: war on drugs; gender studies; gender representations; Latin America; illicit drugs.

Introduction

In recent years, feminist scholars have produced significant material about the gender(ed) dimensions of the war on drugs. By 'war on drugs' one can understand the assemblage of norms, policies, practices, discourses, and knowledge that support militarized control over the production, the commercialization and the consumption of certain psychoactive substances. In Latin America, the war on drugs operates with direct participation of United States' policies, agents, and agencies. When it comes to the US war on drugs,

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feminists have unravelled the gendered nature of criminalizing discourses on drug use (Mountian 2013); the gender performances of immigrant officers and border control agents (Schemenauer 2012); the aftermaths of antidrug policies in the daily lives of Latin American women, especially women of colour (Giacomello 2013; Wola 2011); among other gender(ed) dimensions.

The US war on drugs in Latin America is a direct consequence of what came to be known as the 'supply-side approach,' i.e., the idea that the most efficient way to curb the illicit drug trade worldwide is to interdict the illicit supply chains before they reach the national borders of the 'consumer states,' notably in the Andean region (Rodrigues 2012). Ultimately, it includes the cooperation with foreign law enforcement agencies to fight drug trafficking at the 'source.' Important episodes in this history were the deployment of the Andean Initiative, in 1989, created under George H. W. Bush's administration (1989-1993); the Plan Colombia, in 2001, implemented by the Bill Clinton administration (1993-2001); and the Mérida Initiative, in 2008, deployed during George W. Bush's government (2001-2009). Nonetheless, the rhetoric of a war on drugs has been in operation since Richard Nixon (1969-1974) declared war against drug consumption in the United States. During Ronald Reagan's government (1981-1989), the war on drugs effectively developed its international dimension, reaching the fields and the cities of Latin American countries (Carpenter 2003).

The US war on drugs has many actors, leaders, protagonists. Accordingly, the war-on-drugs discourse has been deployed and enacted differently by each of them. Still, gender representations have been consistently present in the US war on drugs discourse, especially by those who are deemed 'official,' i.e., that intend to speak in the name of the nation-state. Feminist literature is fruitful in addressing the ways through which gender representations inform state-making discursive and non-discursive performances, thus impacting our imagination on how states should 'behave' internally and externally. Equally, feminists have also pointed to the operation of gender(ed) discourses as to legitimate political decisions in the name of national security, especially those that are deemed aggressive, violent. In the history of the US war on drugs in Latin America, gender representations have played crucial roles in the construction of problems, dangers, solutions, responses, enemies, allies, menaces and victims in a way that conforms to the gender(ed) imagination of world politics. As argued by Jef Huysmans (2006), (in)security discourses mobilize a specific imaginary on the possibilities of the political in which the spectrum of the state is prominent. The discursive and non-discursive practices of war have the capacity of (re) affirming or transforming the borders of international politics (Jabri 2007). Therefore, in order to assess the process through which the articulation between war, violence and gender hierarchies (re)produces a state-centric understanding about the political, one must investigate the ways through which gender representations act as conditions of possibility for the discursive construction of war.

This article aims at exploring some of the nuances of the US war-on-drugs discourse when it comes to gender representations. As a state-making discursive performance – i.e., one that (re)affirms the existence of the state as central to modern politics, thus setting

the boundaries of the political imagination –, it has changed over the decades, and so have its gender(ed) dimensions. As a way of grasping US official discourse on the war on drugs, this article deals specifically with presidential speeches from three particular historical moments when gender representations of the ‘drug problem’ were particularly visible: the 1970s, when Richard Nixon allegedly declared war against drug consumption; the 1980s, when Reagan intensified war-on-drugs discourse towards Latin America; and the 1990s/2000s, when George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton deployed the ambitious Andean Regional Initiative and Plan Colombia. The article argues that, although a gendered discourse has been constantly present in US official discourse, it has visibly transformed its character as the USA’s antidrug policies became increasingly internationalized, militarized and oriented by a ‘supply-side approach.’ Once deployed through the feminization of drug consumption as a moral degradation of the nation’s social body, US discourse on the war on drugs perceptibly changed to a hyper-masculinization of the image of the US ‘drug warrior,’ antagonized by hyper-aggressive masculine representations of drug cartels in Latin America, while supported by the less masculine, often feminized figure of the Latin American ‘drug warrior.’

By analysing the gender(ed) dimensions of the US war-on-drugs discourse toward Latin America, this article intends to subvert a number of preconceived assumptions. First of all, it aims at offering a critical perspective that differs from the traditional body of work that considers drugs to be a ‘problem’ or a ‘threat’ to be solved. While mainstream IR theory often treats drugs as a menace to peace, to security and to democratic stability, critical scholarship has been fruitful in unravelling the power relations that support (and also derive from) its practices and discourses (Campbell 1992; Dalby 1997; Corva 2008). The present article aligns with a critical perspective on the ‘drug problem’ that considers it to be an artificial construct that produces and is produced by gender, race, colonial, and imperialist hierarchies in international politics. Secondly, this article also intends to defy power relations that allow global North scholars to study, analyse and scrutinize policies, practices, habits and discourses of the ‘underdeveloped’ world, but hardly ever make room for global South scholars to do the converse. Therefore, this article hopes to contribute to an already robust feminist body of work on the war on drugs by adding complexity to the gender(ed) dimensions of the USA’s official war-on-drugs discourse toward Latin America from the perspective of global South feminist scholarship.

Gender, borders, wars

(In)security performances are central to the production of the state as the main actor of international politics (Campbell 1992; Wadley 2010). Through the discursive and non-discursive articulation of menaces, danger and fear, the state (re)affirms itself as a ‘collective we,’ whose identity is forged in constant relation to alterity (Campbell 1992). More broadly, (in)security performances (re)produce the borders of state integrity, thus assembling a political imaginary on international relations based on hierarchical oppositions between the ‘domestic’ and the ‘international’ realms. The relation between the internal

and the external reflects the duality between the presence and absence of a sovereign entity, the modern state, which produces internal order through its universality as opposed to violent external interaction between particularities that would characterize the international system (Walker 1993). Ultimately, this is the 'heroic practice' as conceptualized by Richard Ashley (1988): the unceasing search for sovereignty that naturalizes the dichotomy between (internal) order and (external) chaos. In this picture, foreign policy is an apparatus through which state sovereignty is fabricated in contraposition to the insecure 'other,' 'a specific sort of boundary-producing political performance' (Ashley 1987: 51).

The production of (in)security and the act of border-making in world politics are particularly informed by gender performances. By gender performativity¹ one can understand the process through which subjectivities are constituted by the same expressions as their results, forming a system of symbolic meanings based on ideas of masculinities and femininities (Butler 1990; Wadley 2010). Nowhere in International Relations is the states' capacity to perform as (the) subject of world politics more prominent, and more related to gender(ed) practices and discourses, than in the field of international security (Wadley 2010). Feminist scholars of international security call attention to the ways (in)security performances are informed by binary ideals about 'masculinities' and 'femininities' so as to conform to (and perform) hegemonic gender norms.

The feminist literature of International Relations is fruitful in addressing the ways through which the nation-state is politically imagined according to ideals of masculinity such as 'strength,' 'power,' 'autonomy' and 'rationality' (Tickner 1992; Whitworth 1994; Detraz 2012). 'By performing in accordance with a dominant model of masculinity, states can constitute (and, thus, position) themselves relationally as powerful subjects' (Wadley 2010: 49). Similarly, feminist thinkers have emphasized the gendered nature of nationalist ideologies of state-making based on concepts such as manhood and motherhood (Nagel 1998), in accordance with heterosexist, masculinist discourse on the nation-state (Peterson 1999). The 'collective we' that is forged through the image of a sovereign, unitary state represents the voices of the masculine at the expense of the feminine (Tickner 1996). Sovereignty is thus 'a crucial reification of human identity as a particular rendition of rational man' (Walker 1992: 191). If the nation is symbolized by the 'motherland,' in the political arena the feminine is excluded and delegated to the private space. In this context, the state is the masculine sign that must protect the cultural moralities represented by the feminine, (re)producing the image of the heteronormative family that is crucial to the metaphoric foundation of the nation-state (Peterson 1999).

Gender(ed) imaginations of the state open room for the 'performance of protection' to gain ground, the effects of which include the protection (and, thus, production) of borders via the process of *war making* in the international arena. It is important to understand the protective performance of the modern state in the light of the well-known gendered dichotomy between the 'public' and the 'private' realms. Iris M. Young (2003) emphasizes how (in)security performances that situate the state as the protector are the same that, through a patriarchal logic (or masculinist logic, in Charlotte Hooper's (2001) words), allow the state to make war *abroad* at the same time that it expects obedience and loy-

alty *at home* (and enforces them through surveillance and detention). The position of the 'protected' is one of subordination, dependency and obedience that, in the private realm, society expects from women and children (Wadley 2010). Equally significant, it also reveals a certain political imaginary of dealing with 'internal' questions of the state – its contradictions, crimes, misconducts, instabilities – in which policing means also performing patriarchal/masculinist dynamics of power, conforming to an ideal of *hegemonic* masculinity based on control, domination and vigilance (Dalby 1997).

Moving further in the analysis of gender(ed) power relations in international politics, Charlotte Hooper (2001) stresses that, in Western societies, gender dichotomies promote the hegemonic masculinity of white, heterosexual, middle class men. To such Western masculinity, which she calls 'Anglo-American hegemonic masculinity,' she attributes ideal types of the masculine, such as the *citizen-warrior man* and the *bourgeois-rational man*. Hegemonic masculinity is thus a normative parameter to which men (i.e., persons socially identified as such) and women (in some contexts) must identify in order to strengthen their power positions. Accordingly, 'the threat of feminization is a tool with which male conformity to hegemonic ideals is policed. This threat works when subordinate masculinities are successfully feminized and then demonized' (Hooper 2001: 70).

In the words of Tatiana Moura (2007: 26, translation by author),

Concepts and practices change, but the *sexed* character of wars seems to be permanent: all wars or armed conflicts are based on the construction of identities and on structures and mechanisms of power and domination that constitute the core of the patriarchal system, that which some feminists call a *system of war*. This system presupposes, in order to perpetuate itself, the construction of a certain type of masculinity (hegemonic, dominant, violent). In turn, this masculinity always needs silenced, invisibilised, and thus marginalized masculinity(ies) and femininity(ies), that can serve as its antithesis, negation and counterpart.

The existence of a hegemonic masculinity is particularly associated with global power dynamics that relate gender, race and imperialism. Hegemonic masculinities depend on racialized, subaltern figures of masculinity and femininity forged globally in the contexts of colonialism and imperialism (Tickner 2001). Despite its limitation, the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' makes visible the intersectional, hierarchical relations that constitute the social world beyond the dichotomy 'femininity'/'masculinity'. It also unravels the process by which (in)security performances constitute the subjects of international politics through the production of borders between 'West' and 'East,' 'North' and 'South,' 'developed' and 'underdeveloped/developing.'

Nixon's 1970s: problems of gender

Richard Nixon is popularly known as the US president who first declared a war on drugs. Actually, what Nixon did was to state that drugs should be considered the country's 'enemy number one' and that the USA should pursue a 'war against drug consumption' (Nixon 1971a). In the eyes of the general public, drug use was reaching unprecedented levels in the 1970s and spreading among the white middle class neighbourhoods as fast as the anti-war movement was spreading among university campuses. Nixon's presidential speeches called attention to the problem of drug use, especially by the young, while pushing for harsh treatment for those who were the 'traffickers.' Nixon thus reinforced the user-versus-pusher dichotomy that came to be in the basis of the USA's internal war-on-drugs discourse in the following decades, one which is fundamentally racialized – in popular imagination, the user is the middle class, young white males and females that live in the suburbs, while the pusher is represented by the image of the dangerous, young black or latino men. While the former deserved 'compassion,' the latter should be treated with 'condemnation' (Nixon 1971b). Also in Nixon's words,

We must have law enforcement that is effective. In this particular area, it is important to differentiate between those who are users and those who are trafficking in drugs. Both, of course, are violating the laws. But for those who are users, we need a program – and this is the fourth part of our program – a program of treatment and rehabilitation. For those who traffic in drugs, for those who, for example, make hundreds of thousands of dollars, sometimes millions of dollars if you are looking at the business generally, and thereby destroy the lives of young people throughout this country, there should be no sympathy whatever, and no limit insofar as the criminal penalty is concerned (Nixon 1972a).

In association with a racialized imagination of the 'drug problem,' Nixon's presidential speeches reflected a broader process of feminization of drug use in the United States. Historically, medical and gender discourses have supported each other in the construction of pathological imaginaries over the use of psychoactive substances in Western societies. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, when medical narratives about drug use became dominant, antidrug discourses mobilize gender representations in order to construct the consumption of such substances as a social problem. During the 1930s, propaganda on the perils of marijuana and heroin use centred on the figure of the female drug user and its social implications to society (Mountian 2013). In advertising pieces, drug consumption was associated with morally degraded, sexually perverted behaviours, especially by young women. Equally important were the racist, colonialist representations that associated the use of cocaine with the incidence of rape among white women by black men – which made clear the influence of the fear of racial miscegenation for gender(ed) representations of drug use.

Ihana Mountian (2013) claims the existence of two main representations of the female drug user in the United States: as a victim and as a menace. As *victims*, women were represented as society's weakest link, more vulnerable to the substances' effects, which would bring irreversible physical and moral consequences. Therefore, illicit drug use was deemed a trigger to female promiscuity and a peril to the nation's moral values. When women did not conform to 'normal' female social and sexual conduct, they would be considered a *menace* to the state's values and morality. Common gendered images of female drug use included inappropriate maternity roles – the 'heroin mothers' of the 1970s – and their association with prostitution (Campbell 2000).

In the process of constructing drug use as a problem and a menace, Nixon's statements often resorted to the metaphor of the 'social body' to represent society's cohesion and tenacity. According to him, drug consumption was 'a problem which afflicts both the body and soul of America' (Nixon 1971b). When such discourse intersects with mental health narratives on drug use, it is possible to see in operation the dichotomy of body/mind well documented by the feminist literature elsewhere (see Butler 1990). The association between mind and masculinity, on the one hand, and body and femininity, on the other, constructs hierarchical gender relations according to which the body must be controlled, dominated, and disciplined by the mind. In this sense, the integrity of the feminine body should be protected by the masculine mind (which must remain masculine at all costs). The imagination of drug use and its effects suggests an association with signs and representations of the feminine: to succumb to insanity, to lose reason, to give up autonomy and control over oneself and the world. Therefore, 'discourses on drug users are often those designated to women, that is, weak, immature, infantile, spontaneous, not able to postpone pleasure, irrational, emotional and dependent' (Mountian 2013: 108).

The state's social body is constructed in modern political imagination upon images of the heteronormative family, where 'women are typically seen as the representative of the social order, the "keepers" of society's morality, having the traditional roles of mothers and carers' (Mountian 2013: 109). Drug consumption was thus perceived as a threat as it '[came] quietly into homes and destroy[ed] children' (Nixon 1971b); 'the first lesson America has had to learn is that drug abuse prevention, all abstractions aside, is a matter of saving lives: our children's, our neighbors, our own, our Nation's' (Nixon 1972b). As Butler (1990) argues, the image of the feminine body is associated to nature and the natural, to something that should be controlled by a masculine, rational, enlightened mind.

Feminist authors in the field of psychology and psychoanalysis have equally stressed the gendered associations made between insanity and the characteristics attributed to the feminine, such as 'irrationality,' 'instability' and 'weakness.' The social imagination of illicit psychoactive substances and their effects suggests an association with signs and representations of the feminine: to succumb to insanity, to lose reason, to give up autonomy and control over oneself and the world. 'Discourses on drug users are often those designated to women, that is, weak, immature, infantile, spontaneous, not able to postpone pleasure, irrational, emotional and dependent' (Mountian 2013: 108). In this sense, feminization of drug use meant not only that women were to be the main victims of the danger of 'narcotic

drugs,' but that drug use itself would feminize individuals and, by consequence, the 'social body,' as Nixon's inaugural speech of the war on drugs suggests: 'we must try to better understand the confusion and disillusion and despair that bring people, particularly young people, to the use of narcotics and dangerous drugs' (Nixon 1971).

In official discourses at the time, the state's social body, the nation, needed to be, at the same time, protected and disciplined, so as to inhibit moral misconduct in the name of rationality. In Mountian's words (2013: 110), 'within this symbolic position accorded to women in relation to nation, drug use configures a special threat to nation, family and women themselves, in the same way as homosexuality, prostitution and obscenity.' Not by chance, proper response to the problem of feminization of drug use came in the form of more severe criminal treatment; more money and financial resources to fight the war on drugs; and, ironically, more 'manpower' to deal with the rising levels of drug use.

In the 1970s, the 'problem' of drug use also won the covers and front pages through the stories of US soldiers who, fighting in Vietnam, became heroin users (Campbell 2000). One decade later, the 'menace' began to move towards the newly born category of 'drug producer-states' from where drugs were deemed to be imported. In both cases, gender representations seemed to play fundamental roles: in the case of the Vietnam War, they were materialized in the image of brave US soldiers who, in the noble duty of protecting the nation, were threatened by an exotic, strange, seductive substance; in the case of internal consumption, they represented the values and the moral integrity of the motherland being threatened by a pernicious foreign threat.

As David Campbell (1992) argues, the discursive construction of illicit drugs as a pathological threat to the nation's social body is accompanied by narratives that relate the internal enemy to an external threat. In this context, the political imagination built around the sign of 'contamination' focused on the outside threats: in Nixon's words, 'this deadly poison in the American life stream, in other words, a foreign import' (Nixon 1971b). According to Mark Neocleous (2003), the historical discursive practice of representing threats to the health of the social body as originating from a pathological exterior contributes to the perception of state vulnerability in spaces in which the state is supposed to be more open to the 'outside:' its borders, seas, airports – images that are present in the imagination about drugs as foreign threats to state integrity and sovereignty. In this context, official discourses on the 'drug problem' related internal drug consumption to external drug production and trafficking beyond national borders. Back to the 1970s, official discourse started to outline a dichotomous narrative that considered the 'drug problem' in the United States as bearing two dimensions – internal consumption and external production. According to Nixon (1971b),

America has the largest number of heroin addicts of any nation in the world. And yet, America does not grow opium – of which heroin is a derivative – nor does it manufacture heroin, which is a laboratory process carried out abroad. This deadly poison in the American life stream is, in other words, a foreign import. In the last year, heroin seizures by Federal agencies surpassed the total seized in the pre-

vious ten years. Nevertheless, it is estimated that we are stopping less than 20 percent of the drugs aimed at this Nation. No serious attack on our national drug problem can ignore the international implications of such an effort, nor can the domestic effort succeed without attacking the problem on an international plane. I intend to do that.

This way of representing psychoactive substances contributed to the creation of a political cartography of illicit drugs that has spread to the present days, and that has at its core the contraposition between 'producer' and 'consumer' states, geographically positioned on opposite sides. According to Thiago Rodrigues (2007), the mobilization of such categories established an aggressor/victim duality at the core of the discursive construction of the 'drug problem,' and thereby stigmatized certain actors and spaces as the 'sources' of international drug trafficking, while others are represented as their target. Cartographic representations of the 'drug problem' in global terms merge with the very terminology of the international political economy, so that, in the map of the war on drugs, terms such as 'farming areas' and 'transit countries' coexist with expressions such as 'consumer markets,' 'demand countries' and 'market routes.'

In this context, images of 'one-way' flows prevail, in which only one kind of relation between these actors is made visible: a relation of demand and supply, of departure and destination. In the words of Dominic Corva (2008: 182-183), 'the spatialization of the drug war is historically rooted in a unidirectional geo-coding of where in the world particular illicit substances come from, and also where social disorder associated with their consumption comes from.' Throughout the years, cartographic representations of the 'drug problem' have become dominant among government agencies, international institutions, and civil society organizations, and was explicitly incorporated within the drug control framework of the United Nations (Corva 2008).

Reagan's 1980s: the drug warriors

Although the 1970s marked the beginning of a clear delineation of cartographic representations of the global 'drug problem,' it was not until the 1980s that official discourse started mobilizing strong gender representations to legitimate the USA's antidrug foreign policies, particularly towards Latin America. In this sense, while Nixon (1972c) spoke of international cooperation with 'allies' and 'friends,' Reagan would favour interdiction strategies to curb drug trafficking outside of US borders and intensify international pressure against 'drug producer-countries' via, among other measures, the policy of Certification (Carpenter 2003). In a nutshell, the Certification was a governing and policing practice deployed by the United States at a global level, aimed at defining the countries that could be governed 'liberally' – i.e., through cooperation – and those who needed to be governed 'illiberally' – i.e., through violence and coercion (Corva 2008).

As US drug policies became more internationalized and militarized, gender representations in the war-on-drugs discourse undertook visible changes. As previously mentioned, the feminist literature in IR has explored in depth the protector-versus-protected

dichotomy and the power relations it (re)produces in international politics. In the 1980s, the 'protectors' image was personified in the representation of the *drug warrior*, the soldiers, law enforcement agents, and police officers (especially those who worked undercover) who risked themselves daily in antidrug operations. In a speech in 1988, the year of elaboration of the United Nations' Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, Ronald Reagan paid tribute to some of those officials who were killed while in duty:

Today we're gathered to honour, as you've been told, the brave public servants who have fallen in the war on drugs. These men took a solemn oath to uphold the law. They accepted the dangerous work of defending our communities, our borders, our families from the scourge of narcotics. [...] What sort of a nation is America? The kind that produces heroes like Enrique Camarena Salazar, Eddie Byrne, Terry McNett, and many others who gave their lives in the battle against illegal drugs. We're the kind of country that will pull together and sacrifice to rid ourselves of the menace of illegal drug use because we know that drugs are the negation of the type of country we were meant to be (Reagan 1988).

Representing the 'benevolent protectors of idealized femininity,' the image of the *drug warrior* supported a gendered and racialized imagination on the war on drugs where law enforcement professionals, border patrol agents, army soldiers and immigration officials incorporated and reproduced the 'white man's burden' of 'fighting the good fight' on the brink of the 'drug war' (Schemenauer 2012: 86). During the escalation of the war-on-drugs discourse in the 1980s, the archetypic representation of the *drug warrior* was Enrique 'Kike' Camarena, a Mexican-American police officer who was tortured and murdered by a drug cartel while working as an undercover agent for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 1985. As a result of the abduction of Camarena and in order to press the Mexican authorities to investigate his disappearance, the United States Customs Service initiated a crackdown alongside the US-Mexican border, from Tijuana to Brownsville, covering a total of 2 000 miles (Poppa 2016). After Camarena's dead body was found, a national commotion followed: criminal investigations in Mexico brought to justice the Guadalajara cartel – including its kingpin, Rafael Caro Quintero, who was still in prison for Camarena's murder until 2013 –, and 'Kike' Camarena became a symbol of the heroes who were bravely fighting the 'drug war' in the far-away, exotic lands of cartels.

The trope of the *drug warrior* was a discursive, performative manifestation of a broader process of militarization of the USA's foreign policies towards the 'drug problem' that found in Latin America its main stage. The construction of a militarized imaginary associated to US drug control policies was related to the very discursive constitution of the 'drug problem:' the rhetorical articulation of an existential threat through pathological signs favoured the idea of equally totalizing solutions and responses. While drugs were imagined as problems to the nation's social body, the war on drugs articulated a number

of representations that intended to recover some sort of lost sanity. In this context, gender representations played a fundamental role: they brought to surface some of the processes through which such movement was established in fundamentally gendered terms.

By relating those men's 'heroism' with the idea of a victorious, warrior nation, Reagan constructed in his discourse an image of the *drug warrior* as ultimately responsible for protecting both the families and the borders of the United States from the 'threat' of drug use. The construction of masculinity ideals based on protection and sacrifice is not only an integral part of the war on drugs – being also justifiable in its name – but also constitutes the logic of militarization of US drug control policies, characterizing the militarized battle as part of the 'type of nation' that 'America' is. Borders and families, side by side, indicate that the object of protection from outside menace is represented by the confusion between the domestic private space and the domestic space of the state – the 'nation' – places that are feminized *par excellence*.

According to David Campbell (1992: 186), the US war-on-drugs discourse served as the basis for the argument that the real source of the 'drug problem' in the United States was outside its borders – according to the Kerry Report of 1988, a result of 'Latin drug conspiracies.' The 'outsourcing' narratives of the war on drugs are thus a constitutive element of the imagination on drug policies within the United States. The ethno-racial and socio-economic tensions that marked the construction of medical discourses on the consumption of psychoactive substances appear, once again, in the process of establishing the 'problem' of illicit drugs in terms of a 'geography of evil,' locating their responsibility in a distant and threatening 'other.' The (re)production of this 'other' also seemed to depend on the internal dynamics of discursive construction of this problem – which, in 'technical' and supposedly scientific terms, is referred to as the naturalized relation between supply and demand.

In the war-on-drugs discourse, US sovereignty and integrity were allegedly endangered by external threats that did not respect the established borders that constitute the modern state system – the borders between the 'domestic' and the 'international,' the borders of modern rationality, the borders of rule of law and of market economy. In such a discursive frame, whereas illicit drugs were depicted as diseases, plagues or poisons that threaten the social body, the state apparatus is seen as 'a therapeutic art: its main aim is to render the social body "immune" to whatever bio-political enemy that may threaten it' (Neocleous 2003: 36). Discourses and practices built around the USA's antidrug foreign policies toward Latin America situate the state and its coercive apparatus in a central position, once they feed, within the countries enrolled in the war on drugs, a number of demands for services of vigilance, repression and control to monitor the influx of illicit drugs.

Therefore, the articulation of masculinities in the war-on-drugs discourse may be understood as one more way by which the state posits itself as the subject of international politics. J. Ann Tickner (2001) comments on how after the defeat of the United States' military forces in Vietnam an expressive movement of militarization of the country's society took place – a phenomenon she called as the 'remasculinization' of the United States. Not

so coincidentally, this process occurred especially during Reagan administration, marked by the intensification of the 'war on drugs' (Fierke 2007). In this context, the trope of the *drug warrior* seemed to be an additional form of reaffirmation of state's masculinities toward an external, anarchical threat that did not respect the frontiers of modern politics and thus constituted a menace to the values and moral of the nation.

When it comes to the war on drugs 'at home,' it is possible to identify in Reagan's key speeches a deepened movement of feminization of drug use that was also present in the 1970s. More than ten years after Richard Nixon declared a war against drug consumption, Reagan not only reaffirmed the differentiation between drug trafficking and drug consumption that characterized Nixon's speeches, but also explicitly feminized preventive policies towards drug use. In his administration, an ambitious educational plan for preventing drug use was developed in schools: the *Just Say No* campaign, headed by the first lady Nancy Reagan. In a statement to the radio on the federal drug policies, Reagan (1982) begins,

[*The President:*] My fellow Americans, those of you who tuned in a few weeks ago may remember that the topic of my broadcast was crime. Well, this week I'd like to narrow that subject down to drugs, an especially vicious virus of crime. In the last few days, I've had two reports on drugs in America. First, Nancy returned from a trip to Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas – one of the many trips she's made, talking to young people and their parents about the drug epidemic. Well, I thought it might be fitting if she told you herself of what she's learned about the drug problem. So, Nancy.

[*Mrs. Reagan:*] Thank you.

In this joint statement, while Mrs. Reagan was designated to speak about her drug prevention campaign for children and teenagers and to call society's attention to 'very positive signs on the prevention and treatment fronts' (Reagan 1982), president Reagan focused his speech on the recent creation of a task force composed by judges, prosecutors, and other law enforcement agents to dismantle drug trafficking in southern Florida and which had already presented some remarkable results: the increase in drug-related arrests and marijuana and cocaine apprehension. During Reagan's administration, the first lady was responsible for popularizing in the whole territory her campaign through official statements, visits to educational institutions and participations on TV and radio shows. In 1985, Mrs. Reagan organized in the White House an enormous conference on illicit drug use in which first ladies from around the world participated – the *First Ladies' Conference on Drug Abuse*. A newspaper article from *The New York Times* complemented (Fein 1985),

The conference today was in fact the second time that Mrs. Reagan had invited first ladies from around the world to meet and discuss drug abuse prevention, a cause that she has promoted ardently. In April, the wives of 17 other world leaders joined Mrs. Reagan in Washington and Atlanta for a two-day meeting that she called a 'mother-to-mother conference.'

First-ladies became 'soldiers' in the war on drugs by conforming to their social gender role of mothers. While their husbands spoke as heads of state, in charge of operations of interdiction and dismantlement of international drug trafficking organizations, those women were dedicated to the part that would be socially adequate for them: the actions of caring, treatment and prevention of drug use, speaking directly to families and to the youth. It is hard to think of a historical moment of the war on drugs in which the dichotomy between 'compassion' and 'condemnation' appeared in a more gendered fashion: in a moment when the militarization of US drug policies toward Latin America was getting stronger and stronger, grounded on the discursive trope of the *drug warrior*, non-militarized approaches were considered, more than ever, *feminine*.

Bush's and Clinton's 1990s: subaltern masculinities

The construction of cartographic representations of the 'drug problem' underlay the militarization of US antidrug discourse during Ronald Reagan's government. His immediate successors, George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, pursued this very same strategy, while subtly shifting the focus of action from interdiction to add more emphasis on cooperation with Latin American countries to fight drug trafficking at the 'source' (Carpenter 2003). In the words of George H. W. Bush (1989a), 'the war on drugs is no metaphor. We've been slower to recognize that it is also a world war.' During the 1990s, regional offices of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) were installed in different Latin American countries, and technical and military cooperation with Andean governments intensified local 'drug wars.' If it is true that countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia agreed to a greater or lesser extent to cooperate with the United States in this matter, it is not possible to say that cooperation came without question: the supply-side approach was consistently criticized by government officials, specialists and civil society organizations as a strategy of the USA to 'outsource' the costs of violence associated with the drug war to their southern neighbours, while doing too little to curb internal demand for drugs (Carpenter 2003).

Thus, in the 1990s and early 2000s, US war-on-drugs discourse centred predominantly on bilateral cooperation with 'drug producer' countries, notably from the Andean region. Language favoured the idea of 'help' and 'assistance,' often as a result of local demand: 'one of the first requests we get in every one of those countries is "send in the FBI; we need help"' (Clinton 1995). Criticism that cooperation in antidrug affairs could be considered an 'intervention' was fiercely refuted: 'how anybody could suggest it was an intervention in the internal affairs is ridiculous' (Bush 1990); 'the purpose of this meeting [the Drug Summit, in San Antonio] is to maximize cooperation, and I think each leader – and they can speak for themselves – will agree that's exactly what happened' (Bush 1992). Even so, assistance was conditioned to proper behaviour from the part of the assisted: 'we want to do more with you if you are willing to take the steps necessary to deal with it. [...] All I can tell you is that we will do more to help stop the drug problem [...] if the governments are willing to work with us' (Clinton 1994).

The discursive construction of cooperation with Latin American states to fight the local 'drug wars' was again supported by gender representations centred on the trope of the *drug warrior*, now intentionally expanded to its southern counterparts. These are the 'judges and prosecutors and political leaders who have taken on the drug problem, [and] have done it at terrible risks' (Clinton 1994). Speaking of Colombian president Cesar Gaviria (1990-1994), Bush declared, 'we honor him and his countrymen, knowing they've borne a very difficult burden in this war and knowing that it is their survival that's at stake every day' (Bush 1991). The figure of the Latin American drug warriors was a subaltern, less qualified version of the 'American soldiers' of the war on drugs – warriors in need of assistance and help –, while, at the same time, antagonized with the concurrent image of the drug cartels, the hyper-aggressive, ruthless *drug lords*. These two figures were found in common discourses that localized the 'drug problem' outside the United States' borders, as in a televised statement made by Bill Clinton (2000a) on the brink of implementing Plan Colombia:

Last year I met some of the most talented and adorable children in the world from the village of Valledupar. Ten of them, some as young as 6 years old, came thousands of miles with their accordions and their drums, their bright-coloured scarves and their beautiful voices, to perform for us here at the White House. They sang 'El Mejoral'. They sang 'La Gota Fria'. Everyone who heard them was touched. Those precious children come from humble families. They live surrounded by violence. They don't want to grow up to be narco-traffickers, to be guerrillas, to be paramilitaries. They want to be kings of Vallenato. And we should help them live their dreams. Thousands of courageous Colombians have given their lives to give us all this chance. Now is the moment to make their sacrifice matter. It will take vision; it will take courage; it will take desire. You have all three. In the midst of great difficulty, be strong of heart. *En surcos de dolores, el bien germina ya.*

In Clinton's speech, two masculinist tropes stand out to view: a negative, subaltern masculinity, represented by the drug trafficker that threatens the children, the families, the physical and moral integrity of the Latin American state; and a positive masculinity, represented by military forces, which sacrificed themselves in the name of protection. More subtly, the masculinity of Latin American officials was called into question as an incomplete or feminized masculinity, whose inability to protect their own people justifies the militarized involvement of the US government in a conflict that, in thesis, was none of its business. 'Assistance,' represented by the hegemonic masculinity of the US government, depended on subordinate masculinities – sometimes hyper-aggressive, in the case of the *drug lords*, sometimes feminized or less masculine, as in the case of the Latin American *drug warriors*. In Clinton's words, 'given the magnitude of the drug trafficking problem and their current economic difficulties, neither the Government of Colombia nor its neighbors can carry the full burden alone' (Clinton 2000b).

Running their outlaw business on the margins of the state system, the *drug lords* were ultimately represented as a fundamental menace to international order, as some sort of subordinate masculinity that dilutes borders and act in parallel to the modern nation-state. According to the National Security Decision Directive 221 (NSSD-221), illicit drug commerce threatened 'the integrity of the democratic governments by corrupting political and judicial institutions,' in which governments become 'unable to control key areas of its territory and elements of its own judiciary' (Carpenter 2003: 30). Response to the gendered dangers posed by drug traffickers to the good functioning of the international system thus came in the form of increasing militarization, also framed in gender terms: 'our message to the drug cartels is this: the rules have changed. We will help any government that wants our help. When requested, we will for the first time make available the appropriate resources of America's Armed Forces. [...] And for the drug kingpins: the death penalty' (Bush 1989). Gender(ed) representations of the 'enemy' thus helped building 'solutions' that were increasingly militarized; violent in character and in means; and centred on the figure of the Western, masculinized nation-state.

The Andean Initiative, deployed in 1989 during George Bush's administration, and the Plan Colombia, implemented by Bill Clinton in 2001, are two major manifestations of the state-centred, gender-informed militarized approach to drugs pursued during the 1990s. Combining *institution-building* rhetoric and military assistance, both programs relied upon and expanded the imagery of state as the ultimate 'masculinist protector' of (inter)national order (Young 2003). In its first years, Bush's government modified NSSD-221 in order to put more weight on military assistance to 'fight against drug trafficking,' authorizing greater involvement of US anti-drug agencies in Latin American territory through their local units (Carpenter 2003). Meanwhile, the Department of Justice issued a legal resolution according to which US military forces were allowed to arrest foreign nationals in other countries for antidrug purposes (Olmo 1994). During the Bush administration, the Armed Forces took a more significant part in international drug control strategies – an inflection to be continued by the following government of Bill Clinton –, arguably as the direct result of multiple (in)security performances that took the state both as a threatened object and as the ultimate solution to the 'problem' of illicit drugs. Such articulation is, of course, profoundly gendered in its content, enacted and enforced by the logic of the 'masculinist protector' in opposition to subaltern masculinities and femininities.

The Andean Initiative was one piece within a broader set of attempts by the Bush administration to escalate the 'war on drugs' by providing direct or indirect military assistance to Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. The initiative immediately allocated US\$ 260m in military and police aid to Andean countries, but its total budget reached US\$ 2b over the course of five years (Olmo 1994; Carpenter 2003). The priorities included military and institutional cooperation, both conditioned on a good evaluation by US state agencies of the assisted countries' antidrug efforts (Perl 1992). Meanwhile, the growing involvement of the Armed Forces in the 'war on drugs' was strongly supported by national elites, by the National Congress and by public opinion, as polls indicated (Carpenter, 2003). The Andean Initiative would later become part of a regionalized plan for drug control, and

illicit drug trafficking would enter definitively into Latin America's foreign policy agenda, (re)produced as a regional security 'problem.' Bilateral antidrug cooperation was blatantly marked by the pressure that the US government exerted on Latin American political elites to 'require' military assistance (Carpenter 2003).

According to Carpenter (2003), Bill Clinton's administration pursued a more discreet militarized approach to drugs when compared to the media-oriented Andean Initiative. Plan Colombia was a noteworthy exception – so significant that it could hardly be defined as such –, adopted at the end of Clinton's term and carried on in a context of growing pressure for the government to catch the breath of the 'drug war.' After the end of the Cold War, cooperation to 'combat' drug trafficking organization became a crucial point of the United States' foreign policy agenda for Latin America, along with the promotion of neoliberal reforms in the region (Herz 2002). Within this context, the Colombian internal conflict appeared as one of the focal points of US security policies for the region, epitomizing a series of elements that were already identified as 'threats:' transnational crime, the presence of left-wing insurgent groups, and the phenomenon of 'failed states.' Rather than demilitarizing its international drug control policies, the Clinton administration emphasized logistical and training support to Latin American security forces involved in the 'war on drugs.'

Designed as a kind of 'Marshall Plan,' Plan Colombia was at the top of the agenda of then-Colombian President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) and addressed four more strategic points in addition to the 'fight against drug trafficking:' (1) the Colombian peace process; (2) the recovery of the Colombian economy; (3) social and democratic development; and (4) the reform of the justice and human rights systems (Rivillas 2002). Conceived as an economic development program advocating alternatives to illicit cultivation, it was supposed to be supported not only by the governments of the United States and Colombia, but also by European countries, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (Carpenter 2003). However, different authors converge in the evaluation that, in practice, the major part of Plan Colombia consisted in investments in the Colombian security forces – responding, according to Borja Díaz Rivillas (2002) to 78% of its total resources – via the transfer of money, equipment and expertise to police and military forces, within a broader process of militarization of regional drug control efforts (Tokatlián 2002; Carpenter 2003).

Conclusions: continuities and re-articulations

This article aimed at offering a global South, feminist reading of the US war-on-drugs discourse towards Latin America. In particular, it argued that, although a gendered discourse has been constantly present in US official discourse, it has noticeably transformed its character as US antidrug policies became increasingly internationalized, militarized and oriented by a 'supply-side approach.' Once deployed through the feminization of drug consumption as a moral degradation of the nation's values and morality, US war-on-drugs discourse perceptibly changed to encompass a process of hyper-masculinization of the

figure of the *drug warrior*, supported by subordinate masculinities and femininities represented by the subaltern, feminized Latin American *drug warriors*, antagonized by the ruthless, hyper-aggressive *drug lords*.

Ultimately, gender(ed) representations in the US war-on-drugs discourse help to limit the political imagination of the 'drug problem.' They determine gender standards to which the state should correspond in order to affirm itself as the main subject of (inter)national politics. They (re)inscribe in gendered terms the borders between 'domestic' and 'international,' 'order' and 'chaos,' 'rational' and 'irrational,' and 'North' and 'South' that constitute the modern politics. They work as conditions of possibility for framing the war on drugs as the one and only 'solution,' thus reaffirming the imperative relation between *problems* and *solutions* that the problem-solving literature reproduces and that, in many ways, seeks the pacification of ambiguities and the domination of uncertainty. This incessant search for sovereignty has as ultimate goal the total control, domination and vigilance of human interaction with psychoactive substances, attributes of a hegemonic state masculinity *par excellence*. Through gendered (in)security performances, the state defends not only its 'physical' borders from external threats, but also its own frontiers of possibility.

More recent developments indicate that gender(ed) representations still inform, to a lesser or greater extent, the USA's discursive and non-discursive war-on-drugs/drug-policy performances, both at home and abroad. George W. Bush (2001-2009) carried forward the gender-based, militarized, 'supply-side' strategy to deal with drug trafficking in the Americas, escalating Clinton's Plan Colombia and deploying the Mérida Initiative, also known as Plan Mexico for its similarity with the former. In a speech in the Council of the Americas, in 2008, Bush declared, 'I am deeply concerned about how lethal and how brutal these drug lords are' (Bush 2008). The Mérida Initiative consisted in a multilateral cooperation plan involving Mexico, the United States and Central American countries around the fight against regional organized crime. The Initiative's first cycle (2008-2010) received more than US\$ 1b in the forms of training and equipment to the police and armed forces of the states concerned, and had as a declared objective to reduce 'the drug trafficking problem, cartel influence, and associated violence and corruption, while restoring order' (Abu-Hamded 2011: 38). Bush's innovation came in the form of novel articulations between the 'war on drugs' and 'war on terror' agendas, in a broader context of mobilization of the logic of 'masculinist protection' for the expansion of the US security state in the aftermath of 9/11 (Young 2003).

Continued by Barack Obama (2009-2017), the Mérida Initiative was expanded, but lost part of its militarized character in order to foster *institution building* and the rule of law (Bernardi 2010; Rosa 2013). Internationally, Obama adopted the discourse of 'shared responsibility' so as to acknowledge United States' active participation in the global drugs and arms trades. In a news conference with former Mexican president Felipe Calderón, Obama stated, 'a demand for these drugs in the United States is what is helping to keep these cartels in business. This war is being waged with guns purchased not here [in Mexico], but in the United States' (Obama 2009). Additionally, during Obama's administration, internal war-on-drugs discourse was attenuated as a growing number of states decided for

marijuana regulation, while discussions on the racial impacts of drug policy on incarceration finally gained prominence among public opinion. In 2009, R. Gil Kerlikowse, then *drug czar*, explicitly declared that ‘the metaphor and philosophy of a “war on drugs” is flawed’ (Kerlikowse 2009). Although the abovementioned movements seem to indicate that major tactical and rhetoric inflections happened, it is fair to say that the structure that sustains the ‘war on drugs’ remained largely untouched, both at home and abroad (Dickinson 2016). One possible explanation comes from the fact that the very cartographies that inform the USA’s international antidrug efforts are still at play – although the producer-versus-consumer dichotomy was re-articulated under the discourse of ‘shared responsibility,’ it is still unaltered. The everyday (in)security practices and discourses performed by officials, border patrollers, police officers, law enforcement agents and politicians may provide another justification.

Donald Trump’s (2017-present) government is again raising the stakes of the war on drugs discourse: on the one hand, by giving utmost importance to the so-called ‘opioid crisis;’ and, on the other, by combining the ‘drug problem’ in America to a renewed foreign menace: illegal immigration. During the presidential campaign in 2016, Trump declared, ‘we have some bad, bad people in this country that have to go out. We’re going to get them out. We’re going to secure the border. And once the border is secured, at a later date, we’ll make a determination as to the rest. But we have some *bad hombres* and we’re going to get them out’ (see Rhodan 2016). Two years later, the same discourse remains unaltered, as he states, ‘my administration is also confronting things called “sanctuary cities” that shield dangerous criminals. And, every day, sanctuary cities release illegal immigrants and drug dealers, traffickers, and gang members back into our communities’ (Trump 2018). And he adds, ‘they’re safe havens for just some terrible people. Some terrible people.’ A closer look at the discursive and non-discursive performances of US political leaders, law enforcement agents and border patrol officers may reveal that gender representations still play an important role in the construction of the current ‘drug crisis,’ now in direct association with racist and xenophobic discourses and practices associated with the fight against illegal immigration.

Notes

- 1 The concept of ‘performativity,’ as proposed by Judith Butler (1990) and well explored in the field of international security by David Campbell (1992), Cynthia Weber (1998) and Jonathan D. Wadley (2009), among others, allows a certain degree of reflection on the constitution of subjects through those practices which are commonly understood as their expressions. In other words, the state, the armed forces, the police institutions, the politicians, the men and women only make sense in the world when they perform in accordance to existing norms of continuity and conformity (Butler 1990). In other words, they are social constructs that have materiality, but not in a substantialist sense – as if they existed previously as subjects before they perform social roles. The subjects of (inter)national politics are constituted to the extent that they perform as such, fitting to the regulatory practices of their own subjectivities and that conform, ultimately, a number of social power relations.

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Mães, Guerreiros e Senhores: Cartografias Genderizadas da Guerra às Drogas dos EUA na América Latina

Resumo: O objetivo desse artigo é oferecer uma leitura latino-americana feminista a respeito de representações de gênero que constituem o discurso de guerra às drogas dos EUA para a América Latina. Baseando-se na literatura feminista sobre segurança internacional, esse artigo visa explorar algumas nuances do discurso de guerra às drogas dos EUA quando isso se trata de gênero. Ele argumenta que, embora um discurso genderizado esteja constantemente presente no discurso oficial dos EUA, ele tem visivelmente mudado de caráter à medida que as políticas antidrogas dos EUA se tornaram cada vez mais internacionalizadas, militarizadas e orientadas por uma ‘abordagem do lado da oferta.’ Uma vez implantado através da feminização do consumo de droga como uma degradação moral do corpo social da nação, o discurso dos EUA de guerra às drogas mudou perceptivelmente para abranger um processo de hiper-masculinização da figura do guerreiro antidrogas, apoiada por masculinidades e feminidades representadas pelo subalterno, feminizados guerreiros antidrogas Latino Americanos, e os senhores das drogas implacáveis e hiper-agressivos. Em última análise, as cartografias genderizadas do discurso de guerra às drogas dos EUA funcionam como condições de possibilidade para enquadrar a guerra às drogas como única ‘solução’ para o ‘problema da droga’ e reafirmam a busca incessante por soberania que tem como último objetivo o controle total, dominação, e vigilância da interação humana com substâncias psicoativas, atributos de uma masculinidade de um estado hegemônico por excelência. Através de performances de (in)segurança de gênero, o Estado defende não apenas suas fronteiras ‘físicas’ de ameaças externas, mas também suas próprias fronteiras de possibilidade.

Palavras-chave: guerra às drogas; estudos de gênero; representações de gênero; América Latina; drogas ilícitas.

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