# TRANSNATIONAL POLICING FIELD: THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION AND THE BRAZILIAN FEDERAL POLICE

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**http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0102-105136/114**

## Introduction

With the increasing transnationalization of police activity, new and more robust legal instruments such as laws, treaties, and international conventions progressively emerge to offer legality, recognize and endorse these practices. This leads to drug control norms and law enforcement strategies intensively shared among police agencies around the world, coming to occupy a place of growing importance on the international agenda and making policing a crucial subject to international relations.

Recognized as a trafficking route for cocaine produced in Latin America, Brazil has become an important target for transnational anti-drug policing. The so-called "war on drugs" led US government agencies to work hardly to influence drug policies in other countries, providing numerous foreign agencies with assistance and training to this end. The establishment of a police agency dedicated exclusively to drug-related crimes in 1973, Enforcement Administration (DEA), represented a fundamental step in this process. Throughout the years, DEA gained political relevance, accumulating prestige, budget, responsibilities,

and powers, besides expanding its operations abroad. In Brazil, it worked in liaison with the Federal Police (PF)[1], establishing lasting ties with such institution – the issue addressed by this paper.

Thus, this study aims to understand the connections between the DEA and the PF regarding drug control, focusing on the role of such bureaucracies at the transnational level while considering their relative autonomy in relation to the respective governments. Such an interaction is not solely based on decisions taken at the highest echelons of government, so that analyzing the process from the perspective of organizations and individuals at the middle and lower echelons of state bureaucracies – such as police agencies and police officers – allows us to understand the autonomous decisions they make on a daily basis, as well as how government plans turn into concrete reality (Marenin and Akgul 2010; Sheptycki, 2002).



Based on this approach, we apply the "transnational" concept and analytical scale, allowing us to observe direct interactions between state agencies beyond governmental relations. According to the specialized literature on the theme (Aas, 2013; Sheptycki, 2007), globalization processes such as transnational crime and crime control have boosted a demand for new concepts and analytical scales that go beyond the strict internal/external, national/ international, and state/non-state dichotomies so common to IR scholars and decision makers.

To this end, we mobilize Pierre Bourdieu's (1971) notion of field as a thinking tool to examine the relations between police agencies from various countries within a single network. Also inspired by this analytical lens, Didier Bigo (2013; 2016) highlights that such a network

[1] Throughout the paper, the Brazilian Federal Police will be referred as PF, acronym institutionally used to refer to the institution in its native language – "Polícia Federal".

reach transnational dimensions, producing a transnational policing field termed by him as "transnational guilds," that is: a group or an elite of professionals who possess their own agendas and priorities transnationally articulated. Here, our understanding of the transnational policing field includes public and private professionals who share the same functions, missions, knowledge, and worldviews of crime control, especially drug-related crimes. With that, we seek to highlight that those police agencies routinely engage with each other outside formal and institutionalized parameters.

Those connections are established between state bureaucracies from different parts of the world, supported by a set of knowledge, ideas, values, routines, and practices that are shared among them and that constitute their *habitus* – to use Bourdieu's term (1990). From such connections emerge close bonds of identity and loyalty, enabling different mechanisms of exchange, cooperation, competition, and exercise of power. These connections either transcend or occur in parallel to the relations established by the diplomatic field or what we traditionally assume to be inter-state relations (Bigo, 2016; Leander, 2008; 2011).



Since the 1990s, several studies have endeavored to investigate the role of the United States (US) in internationally spreading its own "war on drugs," influencing a series of laws, policies, and institutions dedicated to this problem, especially in Latin American states (Del Olmo, 1990; Rodrigues, 2012). While some authors addressed the importance of international regimes in homogenizing and shaping other states national laws (Andreas; Nadelmann, 2006; Andreas, 1995), others sought to understand a variety of coercive instruments mobilized by the US, such as international interventions and forms of diplomatic pressure (Bagley, 1988; Grandall, 2002; Rodrigues, 2012; Walker III, 1999). Brazilian scholars such as Batista (1997), Carvalho (2013), Boiteux (2006) and Silva (2013) are committed to understanding how Brazilian

laws and drug-related policies were historically consolidated reflecting international definitions and guidelines. Despite this remarkable bibliography, few authors have investigated the relations between law enforcement agencies and their role in spreading the "war on drugs" to Latin America (Nadelmann, 1993; Ricart, 2018; 2019; 2020; Sheptycki, 1996). Most of those who formulated the research agenda on transnational policing neither have stablished a definition to the concept of "transnational," nor have thematized the "war on drugs" radically enough, especially regarding the Brazilian scenario (Bowling and Sheptycki, 2012; Goldsmith and Sheptycki, 2007).

Contributing to this agenda, this paper aims to understand one of the paths by which the US drug control model was disseminated to Brazilian law enforcement institutions, exploring the connections between the DEA and the PF. We argue that such an exchange was possible due to the consolidation of a transnational policing field, which provided a social space for interaction and exercise of power and, consequently, enabled the sharing of knowledge, values, techniques, and common practices among various police forces. Our results also allow us to infer that DEA assumed a prominent role in shaping the field and in disseminating the elements that constituted its *habitus*.



This study intends to contribute to the research agenda in two distinct ways. Firstly, from a theoretical-analytical perspective, by proposing to think about state agencies autonomy and the possibility of examining their interactions as transnational. Such an analysis indicates that those interactions, often taken informally, were enabled by the field, which offered a socialization space for drug policing specialists. Secondly, from a political and empirical perspective, we contributed by highlighting the DEA ability to define agendas and influence police action around the world. With that, we aim to point out

potential implications for democratic accountability over public security.

Data were collected in the light of the historical evolution of DEA/PF cooperation, considering the strategies, interests, and degree of autonomy in daily interactions of each agency, from US and Brazilian government documents describing the cooperation terms. US documents comprised those published by the Department of State (DOS), the Department of Justice, the DEA, and the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), published annually by DOS, was one of the most important sources for this research, assessing the drug policies of the major drug producing and transit countries, as well as their cooperation efforts with the US. The audits produced by the GAO provided critical assessments of the programs conducted by the DEA, even pointing to the lack of governmental control. In turn, the documents provided by DOS provided a huge amount of information about US police agencies expectations towards their Brazilian peers, highlighting the role of training and events in these efforts.



Brazilian documents comprised all accessible memos of understanding (MoUs) signed between Brazil and the US (from 1992 to 2008), which describe the necessary material, financial, and human resources to implement the agreed upon terms. Besides providing relevant information about how the cooperation took place, these few documents also evince the lack of transparency in Brazilian institutions – given the scarcity and vagueness of the formalized and disclosed information. Such concern was the subject of investigations requested by government sectors, whose reports also provided important information.

However, as official documents offer limited evidence on the informal dimension of DEA and PF relations, we also relied on interviews with Brazilian police agents and

journalistic investigations that denounced DEA presence in Brazil. Besides offering new facts, these sources also enabled a better comprehension on the rationality and degree of autonomy of the authors in their transnational interactions. We had access to a huge amount of information that covered this period, but we chose to highlight key events that illustrated the argument in question.

Apart from this introduction, this paper is divided into four sections. The first section seeks to investigate the associations between law enforcement bureaucracies by mobilizing the transnational analytical scale. By employing Bourdieu's notion of field, we assume a transnational policing field shared by the DEA and the PF. The second section retraces the setting of the transnational policing field, emphasizing the approximation between both agencies at stake. To this end, we present the most diverse mechanisms through which these institutions began to interact to internationally control drugs. In the third section, we propose a power hierarchy that defines the transnational policing field, highlighting asymmetries between both institutions, which allow the PF to influence DEA anti-drug policing practices. Finally, we conclude the text by highlighting the contributions of the thinking tool to further research on police agencies transnational actions and their implications for drug policies.



## New Analytical Scales: understanding the transnational field of policing

Local, national, and international interdependent relationships established between policing agencies constitute what we conceive as "transnational" – a term used by the IR literature since the 1970s as part of the globalization process, which stimulates "contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of governments" (Nye and Keohane, 1971, p. 331).

IR scholars tend to restrict the term to non-state actors, assuming as transnational an entity that is not part of a given state or nationality, as if its global condition made it foreign or non-national (Bigo, 2016). Such a definition presupposes that state bureaucracies cannot act transnationally, but only through interstate relations.

Although the legal functions of police are limited to the enforcement of state law and thus to national jurisdiction and territory, cooperation between police agencies and the internationalization of police functions have become increasingly common. Therefore, we understand that state agencies such as the police can act in national and transnational social spaces simultaneously, eliminating the possibility of an essential definition of their nature. Before the numerous interactions among different public and private police agencies worldwide, these dimensions are continuous and overlapping.

Considering that, Bourdieu's notion of field may function as a thinking tool to understand a social dynamic little addressed by the literature, namely the transnational interaction between state agencies such as the police. Other IR scholars have likewise employed Bourdieu's contributions as a possible analytic lens to investigate relations between public and private actors on a transnational scale (Adler-Nissen, 2011; Bigo 2011; Dezalay and Garth, 2011; Leander, 2011), as well as by criminology scholars dedicated to understanding policing as its own field of action (Bowden, 2021; Chan, 2001; 2004; Sheptycki, 1998). Thus, the case presented in this paper will be explored by dialoguing with this literature.



According to Bourdieu (1971), field refers to a relatively autonomous subsystem of relations characterized by the sharing of common understandings, values, functions, and practices. Each field is also characterized by its own "capital," which determines the power resources in dispute

and the terms of the relations that take place within it. Relations of cooperation and competition are established within this social space and structured around the access to this capital – which can be budget, technology, knowledge, credentials, or any other resource that is the object of dispute. According to the capital they possess or import from other fields to which they also belong, social actors occupy distinct hierarchical positions within a field (Leander, 2011). Thus, the most powerful actors in a field assume the authority to assign value to the capital possessed by other members (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

As fields coexist, influencing and affecting each other, a field is only relatively autonomous. In some cases, different fields coexist within a meta-field, whose influence affects other subfields. Bourdieu (2014; 1994) defines the state as a meta-field, consisting of a set of subfields – administrative, parliamentary, or policing-related – within and between which power disputes take place. Therefore, police is understood as a subfield that holds the authority to practice law enforcement by means of a mandate granted by the State, but not as an extension of the State itself. The bureaucracies that make up the State have missions and functions of their own, defining agendas based on possible conflicting interests, including governmental ones. To think "the state" as an actor or as a coherent bloc is a fiction (Bigo, 2016; Bourdieu, 2014).



Agents who belong to a field share a *habitus*, which acts as a "matrix of perceptions, appraisals and actions" that shapes their behavior (Bourdieu, 1990, 53). This indicates that individuals can shape the field, but they tend to act based on the values and practices shared and reproduced within it, resulting in a constant co-constitution of agent and structure (Bourdieu, 1990). This means that the field is not static, but rather in constant transformation due to both its interaction with others and the agency of its members (Bourdieu, 1983b).

We understand that the field of policing is composed of agents committed to crime control from different parts of the world and whose scope is, therefore, transnational. Rather than an institutionalized body, the field is a constellation of actors of varying composition, including law enforcement agencies, but also military or private security companies (Sheptycki, 2002; Leander, 2008). The consolidation of this transnational policing field has enabled complementary and competitive interaction between police agencies worldwide, allowing for the interaction between DEA and PF.

The concept of field allows us to study interactions between social actors beyond the spatiality normally associated with the state-centric and institutionalist approach common to IR (Bigo, 2011). Thus, such a concept enables us to think about the disaggregated action of the State, whose bureaucracies act and circulate transnationally, according to their association with local and transnational fields. Bigo (2016, 409) proposes the notion of transnational guilds "to explain the emergence of a specific group of powerful bureaucratic agents at the transnational scale in the field of (in)security." Other authors have formulated different terms to provide a better understanding of this phenomenon, describing these new forms of global security governance, namely: transgovernmental (Slaughter, 2004), statist-transnationalism (Marenin and Akgul, 2010), and transnational (Bowling, 2009; Bowling and Sheptycki, 2012).



While part of the transnational field of policing, the police are also linked to the State meta-field (Wacquant, 2004). These professionals may feel more subordinate to their governments or more connected to the transnational policing field due to the missions, values, and knowledge they share – what Bigo (2016, p. 406) names "solidarity at a distance."

That is, the State itself is a field of action and dispute, not a homogeneous and unified unit. State agencies – even those considered the heart of the State, such as

the police – can acquire a certain level of autonomy that allows them to act transnationally, working towards the achievement of their own goals and priorities in parallel to a broader agenda of interests defined by the government (Aydinli, 2010; Bigo, 2016; Chan, 2004).

In many cases, police bureaucracies have presented themselves as instruments at the government disposal. For example, the DEA has been instrumental in ensuring the achievement of US foreign policy interests on several occasions (Huggins, 1998; Paley, 2015). However, the specialized knowledge, access to budgets, and prestige of DEA agents enable them not only to acquire autonomy on the performance of their duties in a more agile and skillful way, but also to exercise power over the government itself in defining agendas or transferring funds that address their own interests (Bowling and Sheptycki, 2012).

Considering the scope with which this work is concerned – the development of a policing field in which drug control became the main catalyst throughout the 1990s and 2000s, – DEA has become the world's most powerful police agency, with an unprecedented transnational reach, leading to the establishment of a transnational policing field (Sheptycki, 2000). This field also enabled the interaction with the PF, over whom DEA came to exercise power. This does not mean that the American and Brazilian governments are completely alienated, sharing no political agenda between them or their police agencies. Although the police may be instruments of their respective governments, the case assessed in this research reveals that interactions between the agencies cannot be fully understood from a state-centered lens.



## DEA transnationalization and its connections to Brazilian PF

Since the 1970s, the transnational policing has been oriented by an understanding of the drug issue as a threat to the US national security. In 1971, Richard Nixon declared

"drug abuse" as the country's number one public enemy, against which the government would promote an effective and total "war." Identifying drugs as a major threat has granted the problem a wholly new status, making it a priority for the police and other security institutions. Ever since, successive presidents would refer to the topic as a "war" against a "threat" whose origins could be identified in something external to the North American society.

The mobilization for a drug war at the federal level led to the creation, in 1973, of a police agency exclusively dedicated to drug-related crimes: the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which came to be the most important agency for conducting and expanding US transnational policing – especially towards Latin America. Assuming responsibility for an agenda that became central in the US government circles of power, such an institution gained increasing access to state budget, political power, influence, and autonomy before the State field.



Since its creation, DEA has expanded internationally, establishing offices within embassies and consulates worldwide – including in Brazil, where it is based in Brasília, São Paulo and, more recently, in Rio de Janeiro. The institution overseas functions include participating in bilateral investigations; cultivating and maintaining quality relationships with local actors; promoting and contributing to the creation of foreign institutions; supporting intelligence collection and sharing efforts; and offering courses and training (DOJ, 2007). DEA role in the drug control has gradually expanded across the globe, making it the most powerful and widespread anti-drug agency (Andreas and Nadelmann, 2006) and allowing it to lead the creation of a transnational field of anti-drug policing.

Although the presence of the institution in Brazil dates from its creation, it was only expanded between the 1990s and 2000s, bringing it closer to the PF – institution responsible for

the repression of international trafficking in the country. Since the 1980s, Brazil has become a relevant route for international cocaine trafficking, which led to its inclusion in US anti-drug efforts. During this period that, more precisely in 1986, the governments of Brazil and the US signed the "Mutual Cooperation Agreement for Demand Reduction, Prevention of Misuse and Combating Production and Trafficking of Illicit Drugs", being renewed in 1995 and still in force nowadays.

The joint production and sharing of intelligence are one of the main cooperation fronts between the two countries, so that numerous operations are geared towards this. DEA agents based in Brazil and the PF, for example, hold regular meetings to exchange information. Such constant interactions allow for the building of a relationship of trust, stimulating more permanent cooperation strategies (Hufnagel, 2014). In this sense, the bureaucracies demand agreements that are subsequently negotiated at the governmental level. This scenario ends up defining the DEA main goal, which strives for consolidating a policing field through which it establishes bonds of trust with its peers, thus influencing and shaping the drug debate in the governmental sphere (DOJ, 2007).



Resources provided to the PF were allocated to training; equipment; intelligence gathering; interdiction of borders, ports, and airports; as well as to operations aimed at the dismantling of criminal organizations (DOS, 1996-2013; MRE, 1992-2008). Between 1992 and 2013, Memorandum of Understanding documents determined the transfer of resources from the US to Brazil to improve the capacity of the Brazilian police to suppress the cultivation, processing, trafficking, consumption, and export of drugs to the US. With that, the most diverse equipment and technologies were provided to the country, and a series of joint operations were conducted and financed.

DEA agents actuate in US embassies by establishing ties with their local peers to seek evidence and jointly build cases

and charges, recruiting local sources, interviewing witnesses, sharing information, and supporting local operations. After identifying a suspect, DEA and PF exchange information on hotels, airports, shipment, and passports records. When a drug shipment is seized and the authorities want to know its origin, a sample is sent to the DEA headquarters in the US for laboratory analysis (Lumpe, 2002).

A remarkable example of such joint action is the arrest of the famous drug dealer Luiz Fernando da Costa in 2001, better known in Brazil as Fernandinho Beira-Mar. Besides relying on the assistance provided by DEA, such an institution also brought together the Colombian and the Paraguayan police to this case (DOS, 2002). In 2002, North American authorities even asked for his extradition, which was denied (Ojeda, 2011). In 2007, the Special Investigation Unit (DPU) of the Federal Police initiated the Operation Phoenix in Rio de Janeiro, aimed to dismantle the criminal organization led by Fernandinho Beira-Mar from within the Federal Prison of Campo Grande, in Brazil. The operation received financial support from the Narcotics Affairs Session (NAS) of the US Embassy and from DEA (Wikileaks, 2007).



DEA also maintains confidential sources inside and outside the US that provide information and services to conduct investigations, reporting 4,000 active confidential agents abroad in 2017. However, an audit carried out by the Department of Justice verified the lack of a system for tracking payments to such persons, as well as of any specification of their activities, rendering government oversight very fragile (DOJ, 2017). This information indicates little transparency or democratic control over activities carried out by the DEA and other policing agencies in foreign countries.[2]

[2] The Iran-Contra affair and the death of Kiki Camarena (DEA agent in Mexico) are famous cases that also confirm this assessment.

Government officials reported no general policy orientation for international police training programs coming from Washington. A former US ambassador based in Latin America even mentioned the lack of political guidance from the federal government, so that each agency is free to follow its own program agenda (GAO, 1992, 16) – although the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) of the State Department was formally created in 1988 to coordinate these actions.

In other words, US government officials recognize the autonomy of police agencies in relation to the government command in working with their foreign peers. A frequent complaint from ambassadors is that law enforcement agencies, especially DEA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), share little information about their investigations (Smith and Lippman, 1996). The lack of alignment and coordination between the most diverse programs leads to limited results, especially considering the broader objectives of US foreign policy (GAO, 1992, p. 3). In some cases, DEA interests and agenda may be more in line with the transnational field of policing than with the governmental agenda.



The relationship between police forces, which relate within their own action field, is markedly characterized by informality – a practice recognized and endorsed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The so-called informal cooperation, or agency to agency cooperation, refers to routine police activities such as locating suspects or witnesses, collecting testimony from victims or voluntary witnesses, sharing intelligence and files, collecting evidence, or obtaining criminal records. Despite depending on the existence of bilateral or multilateral legal instruments, these activities are conducted in an autonomous and informal manner (UNODC, 2019). With such a sharing, police officers aim to obtain evidence

that can be used in criminal and trial proceedings, selecting useful evidence, and only then formalizing this cooperation procedure (UNODC, 2013).

Such informality can cross the barriers of legality. In an interview conducted with Getúlio Bezerra, the then head of the General Coordination of Narcotics Enforcement Police (CGPRE), and published in "Carta Capital" in 2002, Bezerra confirmed to journalist Bob Fernandes that part of DEA financial resources were made available to the PF by nominal deposits, informally. A screening conducted by the Central Bank verified two transfers from the US Embassy to Getúlio Bezerra himself (R$ 800 thousand) and Marco Cavaleiro (R$ 1.2 million) – the former head of the agency (Diniz, 2004; Brazil, 2004). Bezerra explains that the US prefers to work this way, because "it resulted in more flexibility, more engagement, speed […] it is much more practical than to have this money go through budgets, bills, and a thousand shelves" (Fernandes, 2002). According to the interviewee, this is an old practice justified by the budgetary limitations of the police and the stiffness of State bureaucracies, "otherwise, we could not rent a house to establish a base, rent a boat, rent a car, pay an informant", limiting the cooperation possibilities (Fernandes, 2002).



In Brazil, these relations autonomy sometimes clashes with the governmental agenda. Through the Operational Data Center (CDO) – an office financed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Brazil – the Brazilian president at the time, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was wiretapped while discussing the bidding process for the Amazon Surveillance System (SIVAM) project (Diniz, 2002). To listen in on Júlio César Gomes, the CDO claimed to suspect him to be involved in drug trafficking (Diniz, 2002). Justified by the "war on drugs" agenda and using the PF channels, the CIA was able to bug the presidential office. This fact is confirmed by delegate José Roberto Benedito

Pereira in a complaint published by "Istoé" magazine, in which he states that "the equipment used to listen in on Fernando Henrique Cardoso came from the CIA" (Diniz, 2002). With access to the President's conversations, the then head of the PF declared: "I've got the man in my hands, I'm not going anywhere" (Fernandes, 1999). This case reveals that the US government can instrumentalize the trust network built via transnational policing, while the Brazilian police were complicit due to the relationships of trust and fidelity built with their North American peers.

The FBI's intervention in the "Lava Jato" investigations was yet another striking case, in an operation that took on international proportions and destabilized Dilma Rousseff's government, Brazilian corporations, and the overall country's politics. Journalistic investigations revealed that FBI agent Leslie R. Backchies was responsible for fighting corruption in Latin America, namely for conducting Lava Jato in Brazil (Viana and Neves, 2020). Dialogues show that Brazilian police officers felt honored on working in proximity with the FBI agent, evincing the agency prestige in the transnational policing field. Reinforcing this approach, the former coordinator of the Task Force in São Paulo, Thaméa Danelon, was invited to present the operation in Washington and felt extremely honored for such a recognition, which granted her credentials and capital in the fields where she engages professionally (Viana and Neves, 2020).



Despite not involving DEA, this case shows how the transnational policing field operates. Conferences, events, and training contribute not only to knowledge transfer, but also to the construction of socialization hubs between agents of justice from both countries in a deliberate effort to foster relationships of trust with Brazilian authorities, building a direct relationship channel so as to influence police work, investigations, and the formulation of laws and public policies. As judge of the operation, Sergio Moro

also received training from US law enforcement agencies (Wikileaks, 2009), facilitating the FBI involvement against Brazilian governmental interests in cooperation with Brazilian federal judges and PF officers.

Currently, PF has been reproducing this practice with its South American neighbors, especially with the Bolivian police, where PF presence has grown since the late 2000s (Castro, 2017). In 2008, the Bolivian government of Evo Morales suspended DEA activities in Bolivian territory. According to documents released by Wikileaks, US diplomats held talks with PF for DEA agents expelled from Bolivia to be transferred to Brazil. However, the negotiations avoided involving the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, which was opposed to the decision due to its close relations with the Bolivian government (Conroy and Viana, 2011). According to US embassy counselor Lisa Kubiske,



> this type of request would have to go through a diplomatic note pending approval by the Director of Transactional Crimes (COCIT) Virginia Toniatti and Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, both of whom would likely delay the request (Conroy and Viana, 2011).

To indirectly guarantee such an approval, Kubiske advised that DEA agents should simply apply for visas to Brazil, so that authorization could be interpreted as an acknowledgment by the Itamaraty. According to the document, despite government resistance, "the Federal Police has repeatedly expressed support for the increase in DEA personnel in Brazil" (Conroy and Viana, 2011).

In the transnational policing field, relations among police agencies occur with a certain degree of autonomy, so that their objectives and interests are not always aligned with those

defined by the governmental body. Police themselves often define the government direction regarding drug policies, influencing political decision-making. In this sense, the articulation of a transnational field that sets values, guidelines, practices, and knowledge surrounding the drug issue is fundamental to insure harmonization in the formulation and application of public policies. That is, drug policies might be designed in the transnational field and disseminated into domestic spheres of decision.

This also reveals and reaffirms that relations between the PF and DEA are not always promoted and sustained by government bodies – governments are not always capable nor interested in managing routine activities of such a cooperation. In turn, changes in government or eventual diplomatic tensions tend to have little short-term impact on these relations. Moreover, this movement also demonstrates the DEA power of influence to disseminate and reproduce its policing forms transnationally.



## Power relations in the field: DEA's role in defining the guidelines for combating drugs

The informality of such police cooperation reveals their own agenda and interests, with somewhat autonomy regarding the guidelines established by their respective government. However, this does not mean that DEA–PF relations constitute a "technical" or simply "problem solving" cooperation; rather, they have to comply with a political agenda led both by the government that creates the agencies and assigns missions and budgets to them and by the police agencies themselves, which mobilize and dispute resources, power, and prestige in their interaction with other police forces (in the field of transnational policing) and state agencies (in the meta-field of the state). Besides seeking to share their skills and knowledge with foreign police, they also want to validate and justify their work before the government.

The police themselves formulate and exercise politics, translated by a dispute for their own capitals within the field.

The documentary research reveals that, in most cases, DEA provides the resources or establishes the parameters, models, and priorities around which the PF must adapt (DOS, 1996-2013), which indicates that this institution both concentrates and defines the capitals in dispute in the field, such as access to resources, prestige, knowledge, and technology. Although relatively independent from the US government guidelines, the importance of DEA in the State meta-field – conferred due to the centrality of the anti-drug agenda in North American government bodies – provide it with access to resources that could be transferred to the transnational policing field.

DEA has had an enormous influence on drug policies and bureaucratic anti-drug bodies in Latin America (Ricart, 2018). Through cooperation programs, this institution managed to guide the PF agenda and evaluate the use of resources and technology in line with agreed-upon objectives (DOS, 1996-2013). With that, DEA aims to train police officers occupying key positions so as to deal with the drugs issue in line with the US approach (DOJ, 2007; Ricart, 2018).



Brazilian police officers seem to support relations with the DEA. When asked about the potential threat to national sovereignty presented by the DEA presence in the PF, the federal agent Getúlio Bezerra[3] stated that guaranteeing sovereignty is only important

> In an ideal situation [...] Our cooperation exists because it is our feeling and our duty [regarding] the issue of drugs, organized crime, or other illegal acts. We will not win this war without cooperation (Fernandes, 2002, p. 31).

[3] Federal Agent at the Narcotics Enforcement Division (DRE/CCP) (1994-2002) and head of the Department for Combating Organized Crime (2003-2007).

Bezerra highlights the sense of duty and mission that he shares with his foreign peers, as well as the need for financial resources on the part of the institution. The 1991 Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on Narcotrafficking (CPI) describes "a situation of flagrant abandonment" of the PF, which had only R$ 20 million to cover all its work. The report states that:

> Today, the Brazilian government does not provide the Federal Police with any resources other than the payment of employees' wages and the supplying of police and station facilities. Virtually all the resources used today to combat drug traffickers are of foreign origin, predominantly North American (Brazil, 1991).

Thus, access to resources reinforced the "solidarity at a distance" (Bigo, 2016) from the PF towards the DEA.



Brazilian police agencies were provided with series of courses for the country to hold the 2014 World Cup. Taking advantage of resources availability and the interest of US state and non-state actors in promoting an anti-terrorism agenda, the Rio de Janeiro state government agreed to establish a DEA office in the capital in 2015 under the claim of combating arms trafficking. According to the Secretary of Public Security of Rio de Janeiro, José Mariano Beltrame:

> DEA is a brand; it has a seal that allows it to obtain information in several places worldwide. It doesn't necessarily have to be against drugs or weapons. But we will have, here in Rio de Janeiro, a specialized group that is already on our side in this fight (Beltrame diz..., 2015).

Once the DEA gains international prestige and recognition, the PF itself begins to demand and reproduce diffused practices deemed as advanced, efficient, and morally superior

in a process that Ricart (2018) describes as mimetic or emulation mechanisms. Access to DEA training and resources becomes an important credential within the PF and through its relationship with other state bodies.

However, this does not mean that relations within the field go by without resistance and conflict. When taking over as head of National Secretariat for Drug Policies (SENAD) in 1998, Wálter Maierovitch declared to be in favor of greater control over DEA activities in Brazil, placing him in direct confrontation with the US embassy (Evelin and Faria, 1999). In a press interview, Maierovitch stated that:

> I did not authorize any foreign agent to operate in national territory. When the Air Force consulted me, I disallowed the landing of a plane with DEA agents and Peruvian police in Cruzeiro do Sul (AC). There's no need for the *chargé d'affaires* at the US embassy (James Derham) to lose his composure, I will not back down (Evelin and Faria, 1999).



The authorities of different countries consider the presence of DEA as intrusive (Ricart 2020), including in Brazil. DEA conducted a series of seminars for police and public security authorities on the 2007 Pan American Games (DOS, 2007). According to police chief Andrei Augusto Passos Rodrigues, "we didn't request, we didn't suggest, we didn't indicate any specific course; the organization, the dynamics, the instructors, the cost, the location, are all up to the US government" (Viana 2014). Such a statement leads us to believe that the ability to provide resources is also translated into the ability to determine the Brazilian police agenda.

The power exercised by DEA in the transnational policing field is based on different strategies, including coercive actions and, specially, consensus building (Ricart, 2018). Since its inception, the agency has provided anti-drug training to its foreign colleagues, offering workshops and

training in the US or in host countries. According to the agency itself, their primary goal is to develop long-term working relationships between police forces and build institutional infrastructure within foreign law enforcement agencies and judicial systems (DOJ, 2007). As part of that plan, training also creates the basis for harmonizing drug policies and laws (Hufnagel, 2014). Analysts point out that Brazilian policies and police work on drug control largely reflect guidelines developed and applied in the US (Carvalho, 2013; Labate and Rodrigues, 2016).

Several factors enable the transnational sharing and transfer of knowledge between state bureaucracies, such as the comings and goings of professionals who attend training, seminars, and conferences in other countries; the dissemination of scientific and pedagogical materials such as manuals, magazines, and articles specialized in the theme; and also the development of a security industry that generates technology transnationally shared and commercialized, creating conditions for the application of this knowledge (Viana, 2017, p. 155). Hence, beyond building a transnational policing field, DEA also establishes itself as the most powerful actor capable of defining the structures and capital in dispute in this field.



Workshops and training form "a brotherhood of foreign police officers," as stated by a DEA agent (*apud* Ricart, 2018, p. 35). This transnational trust network allows for police officers to keep in touch, share knowledge and information, or promote closer ties between their respective institutions. By penetrating and establishing ties in local law enforcement agencies, law enforcement officers build intimate bonds of trust that survive governments changes in both countries, such as in political parties and foreign policy priorities.

The International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC) is one of the most important events organized

by DEA. Created in 1983, this conference sought to institutionalize the regional cooperation of policing officers from Western hemisphere countries. It consisted of meetings under the leadership of DEA to share a certain vision and appropriate solutions to the drug issue, as well as to get closer to their foreign peers. The 2010 IDEC took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and was attended by delegations from 90 countries (DOS, 2011).

The hosting country also offers other courses, in which case the PF must select police officers occupying key positions that will receive training from US agencies to deal with the drug issues in compliance with the North American approach (Ricart, 2018). Once completed, the PF must commit to allocating its use strictly to drug enforcement for a minimum of two years (MRE, 1992).

The training includes a wide range of topics, such as drug enforcement techniques; port, airport, and highway security; intelligence and information gathering; money laundering; precursor chemicals control; and demand reduction. The event also provides training for judges, which includes mutual legal assistance, sentencing, and drug courts. Cybercrime training, community policing, Special Forces operations (SWAT), forensics, interrogation techniques, undercover operations, treatment of informants, cell phone tracking, mega-event security, and training for sniffer dogs are also frequently mentioned in governmental documents (DOS, 1999-2013).



According to a DEA agent, the strategy was to "concentrate training for police officers whose growth possibilities in their own systems were promising" (*apud* Ricart, 2018, p. 37) as to reproduce the knowledge acquired in their own corporations. Brazilian police officers deem that access to DEA training provides them with important credentials to move upward in the corporation. As a result, DEA overlooked the training of specialists

and the organization of a trust network composed of a transnational professional elite. The transnational policing field resulted in the creation of a category of actors with specialized knowledge, disseminating such an expertise both transnationally and locally and potentially shaping the drug enforcement policies of their respective countries.

## Conclusion

The field of transnational policing enabled a socialization that spurred a "solidarity at a distance" (Bigo, 2016) between DEA and the PF, characterized by shared missions, values, practices, functions, and knowledge. Law enforcement officers from both agencies became part of a specific transnational community through which they created bonds of loyalty and trust. In doing so, DEA built a hub through which it could influence the PF work and the Brazilian national drug control policy itself.



The reflection presented in this work aims to argue that the relationship established between law enforcement agencies was key in the dissemination of the "war on drugs" policy model from the US to Brazil – a process identified by a robust group of scholars (Boiteux, 2006; Carvalho, 2013; Rodrigues, 2012). We claim that training, technology transfer, financing, and routine coexistence enabled the consolidation of a specific *habitus* within the field, thus somehow harmonizing the work developed by DEA and the PF regarding drug law enforcement. Being holders of specialized knowledge and credentials, polices were able to exert an important influence on how drug policies were defined at the governmental level.

Being widely characterized by state-centric assumptions, the IR literature has paid little attention to the interactions between law enforcement agencies. In general, State agencies are assumed to be merely extensions of the State and, acting internationally under the command

of their respective governments, who define the foreign policy agenda. Such a barrier, however, has been broken by the literature on the transnational policing phenomenon, being of paramount importance for this research (Bigo, 2016; Bowling and Sheptycki, 2012;).

The case described in this paper aimed to evince that the State homogeneity does sustain when we observe transnational interactions among police agents, whose dynamics could not be captured by the state-centric lens often used to focus on diplomatic relations between States. Thus, we seek to highlight that the State action is not unified, but rather a multiplicity of bureaucracies – each endowed with their own agendas and interests that do not fully align (Bigo, 2016; Marenin and Akgul, 2010; Slaughter, 2004). In this sense, we sought to offer analytical possibilities on transnational interactions that occur between state agencies besides the security field.



Such an assumption was supported by the transnational concept and analytical scale developed by Bigo (2013; 2016) – inspired by the Pierre Bourdieu's (1971) field thinking tool. We observed that cooperation does not develop from decisions made at the highest levels of politics, in the governmental level, but rather that police agencies possess a certain degree of autonomy in their transnational relations, which renders a certain informality in the relationship with their foreign peers.

This perspective allows us to conclude that part of the DEA's strategy consisted of building a network of trusted police officers in the countries where it operates, influencing key leaders in these bureaucracies and discreetly building close ties that could survive governmental oscillations (DOJ, 2007). With that, DEA achieved a permanent transnational social space of interactions, guaranteeing a concerted effort among police agencies around the world. The 1990s and 2000s

in Brazil constituted a key period for the strengthening of these relations. Having the capital resources within this transnational policing field, DEA started to diffuse its *habitus* and provide financial resources, thus exerting an enormous influence on the PF and, consequently, on Brazilian drug policy.

From a normative perspective, this analysis raises questions on the limits of democratic accountability. In this regard, Sheptycki (2002, 336) argues that scholars' responsibility is "to gain access, move between and render accountable the great variety of policing type," guaranteeing a democratic policing while facing the challenges posed by the transnational era –precisely what this paper sought to achieve.

## Acknowledgment

I would like to thank all researchers at the Center for Transnational Security Studies (NETS/PUC-SP), especially Paulo Pereira and Tomaz Paoliello, for their attentive reading and suggestions.

## Funder Information

This article is a product of the author's doctoral research. Therefore, she would like to thank the *Cordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Brasil* (CAPES), for funding it through Finance Code 001.

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## TRANSNATIONAL POLICING FIELD: THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION AND THE BRAZILIAN FEDERAL POLICE

PRISCILA VILLELA

**Abstract:** This paper aims to understand the relatively autonomous development of joint efforts between the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Brazilian Federal Police (PF) in drug international control, in parallel to governmental relations. To shed light on this process, this documentary research resorts to Bourdieu's formulation of field, which provides instrumental tools to understanding the relations between state bureaucracies at a transnational level, thus overcoming the inter-state framework that dominates the International Relations discipline. The findings indicate that assistance, training, and joint operations created a trust-based network among police officers from different parts of the world, enabling DEA to influence the PF conducts, guidelines, objectives, and strategies.

**Key Words:** Transnational Policing; Drug Control; DEA; Brazilian Federal Police; Field Analysis.

## *CAMPO TRANSNACIONAL DE POLICIAMENTO: AS RELAÇÕES ENTRE A DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION (DEA) E A POLÍCIA FEDERAL DO BRASIL (PF)*

**Resumo:** *Este artigo objetiva compreender as relações entre a DEA e a PF no combate ao tráfico internacional de drogas, que se desenvolveram de maneira relativamente autônoma e paralela às relações governamentais. Interpretamos esse processo à luz do conceito de campo oferecido por Pierre Bourdieu, que nos ofereceu os instrumentos necessários para que compreendêssemos as relações entre burocracias estatais em esfera transnacional, superando os marcos interestatais dominantes nas Relações Internacionais.*

*Por meio de uma pesquisa documental, concluímos que programas de assistência, treinamento e operações conjuntas foram ações estratégicas fundamentais na criação de uma rede de confiança entre polícias de diferentes partes do mundo, consolidando um campo próprio, por meio do qual a DEA pôde influenciar as condutas, diretrizes e objetivos da PF.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Policiamento Transnacional; Combate às Drogas; DEA; Polícia Federal do Brasil; Análise de Campo.*

**Recebido:** 03/06/2021 **Aprovado:** 11/11/2021