

Cross-border drug trafficking networks in the Amazon: emergence of international cooperation for regional security

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Executive summary

This is an essay on drug trafficking in the Amazon and the emergence of Pan-Amazonian cooperation for regional security with an emphasis on sustainable development. Analyzing the cross-border drug trafficking networks in the Amazon and their implications for security in recent years, it is noteworthy that the growth of the presence of organized crime in the region presents a territorial challenge in need of more coordinated and cooperative actions to combat it.

The presence of drug trafficking has been connected to other criminal activities, such as environmental crimes, and it has intensified the impacts on the Amazon ecosystem and its populations, thus making the phenomena of violence and illegal networks that operate here much more complex.

Therefore, international cooperation in the Pan-Amazon can be an important strategy for sustainable development and regional security, above all, relating security agendas to the ideals of social justice and sustainable development. The methodological paths of the research were based on fieldwork and bibliographic research to find the necessary tools to support the ideas defended here.

In this context, here are some policy recommendations:

- I) Attention to the growing connections between drug trafficking and environmental crimes, such as illegal mining, in the international Amazon region.
- II) Resumption and strengthening of international cooperation between the countries of the Pan-Amazon — such as multilateral relations between the countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) — with a view to sustainable development and regional security.
- III) Convergence of national security policies, institutionalizing initiatives of cooperation in defense of Pan-Amazonian countries, in order to guarantee the installation of integrated public security and social development policies.
- IV) Strengthening of state institutions, so that the Amazon is resumed as a priority in the environmental agenda and in the policies of Brazil.
- V) Guarantee of social justice through public investments in education, health, sport, leisure, housing, occupation, and income, which guarantee the protection of the ecosystem and Amazonian populations, as they curb the dynamics of criminal activities and strengthen the presence of the Union.

KEYWORDS

Drug trafficking; Amazon; International Cooperation; Mining.

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1. Introduction

The debates on regional security and defense of the Amazon have gained momentum in the last four years in order to mobilize conferences, meetings, scientific productions, among other strategies that emphasize the public order problems the region and its population have been facing. In advance, I emphasize that for a long time, the Amazonian borders have been used by illegal networks that operate within Brazilian territory and also in neighboring countries. Secondly, studies have already highlighted that since 1980 the Amazon basin was already used by drug traffickers to transport drugs produced in the Andean countries² (Bolivia, Colombia and Peru). Also, it is important to verify all socio-spatial inequalities and precariousness of life in the Amazon, with the presence of land conflicts, forced or slave-like labor, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, environmental crimes, among other social conflicts that continue to provide conditions for organized crime to enhance all its territorialization and organization actions in the Amazon.

I highlight these observations in order not to run the risk of erasing the entire trajectory of conflicts in the Amazon that are intensifying from development projects that, in addition to producing environmental damage, have plunged the region into an area of instability whose result is the expansion of violence against forest peoples (indigenous, quilombolas, riverside dwellers) and against biodiversity. Therefore, we should be careful to produce a material as a result of scientific investigations so as not to forget the history of contradictions that the state itself, in partnership with national and international private capital, institutes through the project of colonization and occupation of the Amazonian territory from 1960 on. Otherwise, we could be making a mistake that points to the need for a “war on drugs in the Amazon”³, which may result in the criminalization of indigenous, riverside, and *quilombola* youth who inhabit the peripheries of cities and rural areas in a situation of disputes even today⁴.

Even in the face of these questions, I believe that the presence of the state in the Amazon is essential to curb the strengthening of organized crime, especially with the installation of sustainable economic projects⁵ that value the resources of the forest and keep it standing and alive, building the necessary infrastructure so that education, health, basic sanitation and access to information reach the population, and also the presence of public policies aimed at serving people in conditions of social vulnerabilities. These are the interventions that I define as public security policies, as they break the roots created by crime and strengthen the institutionality of public power.

Regarding border security, I advocate for international cooperation involving Brazil and the Pan-Amazon countries, given that they face common problems related to drug trafficking and the presence of criminal factions in their territories. It is also worth mentioning the role of

2. Research carried out by geographer Lia Osório Machado pointed to the use of the Amazon basin by drug traffickers who turned it into a major corridor for the passage of drugs, especially cocaine.

3. The war on drugs consists of making the fight against drug trafficking a national security agenda allowing the militarization of this policy, it was defined by US President Richard Nixon, because for him drugs were the main enemy of the state. This practice is used by state governments in Brazil and ends up justifying discrimination, racism and genocide that mainly affects black youth in the peripheries.

4. I make this important observation because I understand that in Brazil the War on Drugs reinforces racism that corroborates a policy of death coming from the state and its armed police and addressing black people.

5. Nowadays there has been much talk about the need for a Bioeconomy model, which is industrial production based on the use of biological resources, offering solutions for the sustainability of production systems.

Brazil as a drug transit area for Europe and Africa and, at the same time, standing out as a large cocaine consumer market, after the USA, according to the reports of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC, 2021) and also a potential market for the *skank*⁶ of Colombian origin.

This text aims to analyze the cross-border drug trafficking networks in the Amazon and their implications for security. The spatial representations in Map 1 (below) reinforce the two needs I highlighted above: public security policies and Pan-Amazonian international regional security cooperation. This does not mean that we will be free from criminal activities in the short term, however, it is more than urgent to start thinking about strategies that guarantee regional security for Amazonian populations and full protection of forests, strengthening the maintenance of life and biodiversity.

2. Drug trafficking networks in the Amazon: a constant territorial challenge

In the introduction to this text, I highlighted that the use of the Amazonian space by illegal networks is not recent. The presence of drug trafficking turns rivers of the region into drug transport corridors, uses villages as hiding places, bribes riverside dwellers and boatmen to transport the drug, and uses clandestine airstrips built on farms and mining areas scattered throughout the Amazon.

“What should be seen as something new in this dynamic of conflicts is the increase in the presence of criminal factions operating here in Brazil, entering indigenous, quilombola, and riverside territories.”

In fact, the use of the region by crime is not recent. What should be seen as something new in this dynamic of conflicts is the increase in the presence of criminal factions operating here in Brazil, entering indigenous, quilombola, and riverside territories. Drug trafficking has been increasingly involved in activities related to deforestation, as pointed out by the research report “Cartographies of Violence in the Amazon” (2022) of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security and by the studies of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Global Crimes (UNODC, 2023). In addition, it has been connected to illegal mining, where selling drugs and receiving gold becomes very profitable, as it happens in Jacareacanga, in the Southwest of Pará, with the presence of the Red Command (CV – *Comando Vermelho*) faction⁷. Moreover, drug trafficking uses the entire mining structure, as occurs in Yanomami indigenous lands in the state of Roraima, where an arm of the First Command of the Capital (PCC – *Primeiro Comando da Capital*) imposes a logic of control of the mining territory⁸.

I argue that drug trafficking networks must be understood as important elements for the dynamics of restructuring of space and power relations that establish territorialities in the Amazon. Thus, drug trafficking in the production of the world economy imposes organizational logics of spatial-territorial “orders” and “disorders”, upon different forms of social organization that often demonstrate an overlapping of powers which put into evidence the presence of political and economic forces that produce non-state territories.

The interest of drug traffickers in Brazil was associated with the mandatory passage of cocaine of Andean origin towards the Atlantic, destined for Europe and Africa, and also a more powerful consumer market in the Southeast region, something that strengthened criminal organizations that arose within the prison system and spread to slums and peripheries. I do not name drug trafficking as a kind of parallel power as some usually do. As I understand, for this entire organization to work, it involves the presence of multiple subjects. Social networks

6. *Skank* (also known as super marijuana and *skunk*) is a more potent drug than marijuana, both are taken from the species *Cannabis sativa* and, for this reason, have the same active ingredient in their compositions - THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol).

7. The information highlighted in the text was collected in fieldwork carried out in the Tapajós River Valley region, in the state of Pará.

8. In Roraima, the PCC constituted arms within the mining areas, and this was reported during field activity in the region where I was able to interview researchers, security agents, among others.

“As I understand, for this entire organization to work, it involves the presence of multiple subjects. Social networks are formed consisting of the most varied functions ranging from the planting of the coca leaf, through the clandestine laboratories, followed by the flow involving mules, the corruption system engaging public and private agents and, finally, the mechanisms of money laundering and commercialization.”

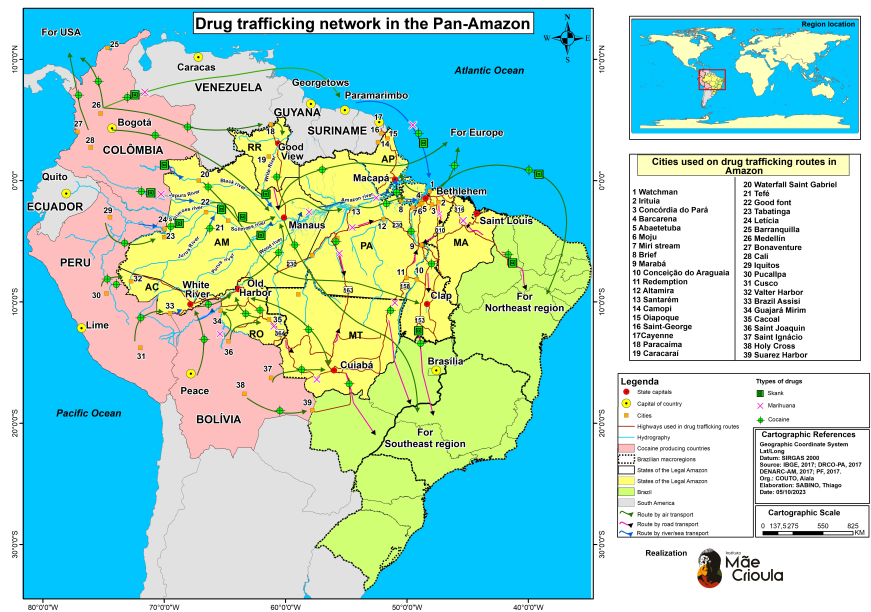
are formed consisting of the most varied functions ranging from the planting of the coca leaf, through the clandestine laboratories, followed by the flow involving mules, the corruption system engaging public and private agents and, finally, the mechanisms of money laundering and commercialization.

It is argued from the works of Couto (2029; 2020a; 2020b) that Brazil’s difficulties in combating drug trafficking were in its extensive dimension at the borders, added to the geographical location close to the coca-producing countries, which established the transit of the drug in the region. Today I recognize the need to complement this somewhat fragile statement, as I also consider the uneven “geographical development” (Harvey, 2005) that created spatial conditions for the strengthening of drug trafficking in the Brazilian, Bolivian, Colombian, Peruvian, and Venezuelan Amazons.

In addition to coca production in Andean countries being a cultural factor, the lost decade of the 1980s favored the expansion of planting and the institutionality of organized crime cartels. This makes it easier to hire hitmen⁹, elect crime-linked candidates, pursue opposition, and corrupt the system. In recent years, the reality of Amazonian (Pan-Amazonian) populations concerning social vulnerability has not changed, and so drug trafficking has gained more space, territorializing itself and constituting “nodes” from centers that have become part of the cross-border interaction network that drives the dynamics of crime in the region.

The following map shows the spatial representations of drug trafficking networks in the Amazon, with emphasis on the Brazilian part, where it is possible to verify the presence of several flows with various routes that are used and identify the municipalities inserted in the organization of the networks.

Map 1. Drug trafficking networks in the Amazon



Source: Instituto Mãe Crioula (2023).

According to Map 1 above, the Amazon River is an important corridor for the flow of drugs, especially for cocaine of Bolivian and Peruvian origins and the *skank* of Colombian origin. Thus, the Amazon basin connects itself to other rivers through the Amazon River, promotes a perfect connection between the places, and exceeds the Brazilian territorial limit. For example, the Solimões River connects the routes that depart from Peru, more specifically using the Javari River and the Içá River, but also integrating Colombia through the twin cities of Leticia

9. This denomination is of Colombian origin and arises during the war between the drug cartels, and they are hired killers or those who are hired to kill someone.

(Colombia) and Tabatinga (Brazil). This route goes down the river through the cities of Tefé and Fonte Boa, heading towards Manaus and integrating with the Amazon River.

The Juruá River is also an important route that departs from Peru through the city of Porto Valter, heading towards the Amazon River. There is also the interaction that takes place by the Purus River, which connects to Peru and Bolivia through the city of Assis Brasil, crosses the state of Acre, and also heads towards Manaus. The Madeira River, like the Purus River, is also a tributary of the Amazon River, crosses the state of Rondônia, connecting to Bolivia through the city of Guajará Mirim and, by the Beni River, extends to the city of La Paz.

Also, the Japurá River is one of the routes that receive cocaine, *skank*, and marijuana (of Colombian origin) in Brazilian territory, as this route goes towards the Solimões River to the city of Manaus, which represents a major distributor. Yet in the state of Amazonas, there is a connection from the Uaupés River, in Colombia, to the Negro River, in Brazil. That is, the Amazon River basin is the great gateway for drugs, and the capital Manaus, the great distribution center.

While the state of Amazonas is extremely important for drug trafficking routes that use rivers, in the states of Amapá, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, and Tocantins, highways fulfill this functionality with regard to the spatial interaction of drug flows in the Amazon, as described in the map highlighted here. The Cuiabá-Porto Velho highway connects the networks that depart from Bolivia, in the border region, with the state of Rondônia. Mato Grosso connects to the west of Pará through BR-163 (Cuiabá-Santarém), which connects to the Transamazônica highway, the Tapajós River, and the Amazon River, integrating Altamira, Itaituba, and Jacareacanga.

In the state of Pará, there are interactions that occur from the Transamazônica, leaving Santarém towards Belém and the northeast region of Pará. Integration occurs through the Belém-Brasília, Pará-Maranhão, and Transcarnetá highways towards the South, Southeast, and Midwest regions of Brazil, in addition to expanding the routes to the Northeast, from the state of Maranhão.

Through the airways, drug traffickers pay pilots of small aircraft that are in charge of transporting cocaine, either crossing the borders on low flights or supplying the aircraft already in Brazilian territory to continue the transport towards other regions. Thus, it is common in the Amazon to have clandestine airstrips that are built to receive the drug. These airstrips were found either in the middle of farms or mining areas in the Tapajós region, in the Southeast of Pará and Roraima, or on farms in Mato Grosso and Acre.

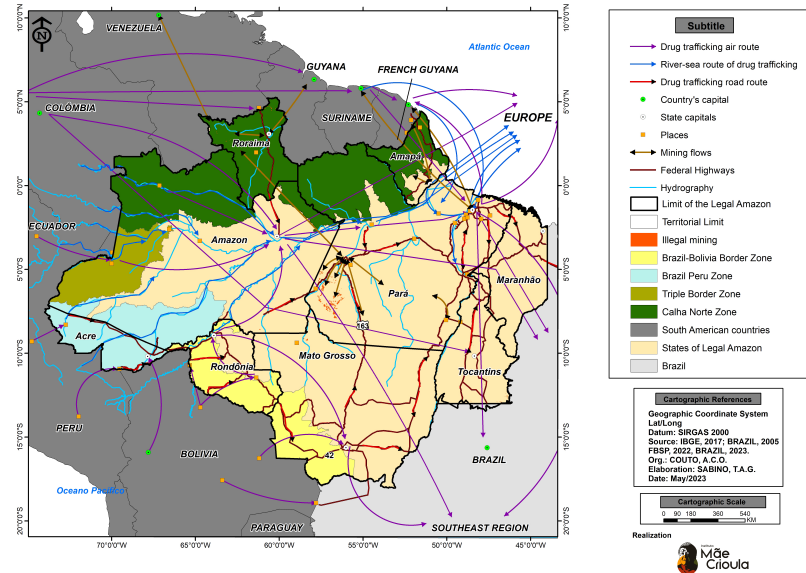
Aircraft do not only use clandestine or legal airstrips built with the authorization of the National Civil Aviation Agency (ANAC - Agência Nacional de Aviação Civil) on private lands. The airports of the capitals, such as Manaus and Belém, have been used as international routes. The connectivity relations that involve these air flows highlight the state of Amazonas, which concentrates more intensely the flows that cross Mato Grosso towards the Southeast region. And, in the case of the state of Pará, there is a connection with international markets, thus completing the drug flow networks in the Legal Amazon.

In this context, territories organized by illegal flows are being formed and, according to Raffestin (1993, p. 204), in these areas, “the network makes and unmakes the prisons of space, making it territory: it both liberates and imprisons. This is why it is the instrument, par excellence, of power”. The author presents a dimension that considers the power relations that networks impose and legitimize as mechanisms of control and domination, therefore, becoming territories, or network territories.

It is noteworthy the complexity of analyzing drug trafficking networks in the Amazon, as the geographic dimension of these networks involves multiple scales and multiple transits ranging from local to global. And in the Amazonian context, it is essential to assume that drug trafficking is a problem not only of the Brazilian Amazon, but also of the international Amazon.

It is also worth pointing out issues described by Map 2 below, which highlights the performance of illegal networks from three zones of instability at the borders, where the advance of illegal mining in areas of environmental protection can be seen.

Map 2. Border instability zones and illegal networks in the Amazon



Source: Instituto Mãe Crioula (2023).

The map highlights the flows of drug trafficking distributed throughout the Amazon from three zones: the Brazil-Bolivia border zone, the Colombia-Peru-Brazil triple border zone, and the *Calha Norte* zone. From there, cross-border and transcontinental connections are established, becoming part of this global interaction. It also refers to the mining flows in the Tapajós river valley region, more specifically in the municipalities of Jacareacanga and Itaituba, in the southwest of the state of Pará (Brazil).

It appears that the mining areas are overlapped by drug trafficking networks, which has been motivating in recent years the entry of drug trafficking in these regions, especially considering the structure built by illegal mining, such as airstrips. At the same time, the interest is in the commercialization of the drug using gold as a bargaining chip.

The relationship between drug trafficking and mining here will be defined as *narcogarimpo* (a Portuguese portmanteau of *narco* and *garimpo*, meaning illegal mining), that is, the **intimate** relationship that drug trafficking establishes with the extraction of gold, building airstrips, taking care of canteens and *currutelas*¹⁰, supplying weapons and ammunition, controlling workers and territorially dominating the extraction areas. We can also define *narcogarimpo* as the trade/retail relationship that takes place within the mines where the drug is exchanged for gold, as already highlighted, arousing interest in this market.

The two definitions fit perfectly into the realities experienced by Roraima and Pará, where the first definition has been occurring in some areas of the Yanomami lands, on the border with Venezuela, with the presence of factions such as the PCC, on the Brazilian side, and the Araguá Train (*Trem do Araguá*) and the Guayanas Train (*Trem das Guianas*), on the Venezuelan side. The second definition is an example of what has happened in the Munduruku lands, in Itaituba and Jacareacanga. With this, a new scenario of conflicts in the region arises, and it becomes an object of concern of the state concerning the defense of the territory. They are new territorial dynamics in networks in the Amazon, spatially organized, that do not respect

10. The canteens are the places where miners make purchases and often accumulate more debt, since a credit system based on the word is established there. *Currutela* (brothel), on the other hand, is the environment in which the bar, prostitution, and the rooms used by customers are organized, sometimes it is the same place where the call girls live through the payment of rent.

the limits of the national territory, and their relations go beyond Brazilian borders and need to be understood by the states.

3. Pan-Amazon: emergence of international cooperation for regional security?

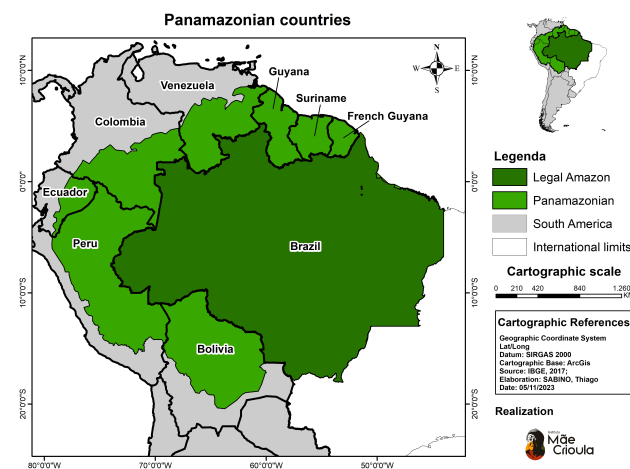
“International cooperation between the countries of the international Amazon, or Pan-Amazon, sounds like an important strategy for sustainable development and regional security. In Brazil’s foreign policy regarding the defense of the Amazon, environmental and public security issues must appear together and be at the center of the debates that have been building institutional agendas.”

International cooperation between the countries of the international Amazon, or Pan-Amazon, sounds like an important strategy for sustainable development and regional security. In Brazil’s foreign policy regarding the defense of the Amazon, environmental and public security issues must appear together and be at the center of the debates that have been building institutional agendas. I understand that the Amazon region is at the heart of the discussions that put the climate security agenda as a matter of planetary security, and following the pace of growth of environmental crimes, it is necessary to face the fact that there is a connection between drug trafficking and deforestation as pointed out by UNODC studies (2023)¹¹.

In the previous administration of the Brazilian government (2019-2022) the environmental issue was not seen as essential in the internal (nor external) political agenda, which produced a negative image of Brazil on the international scene. The climate conferences highlighted the need for an action plan to protect the equatorial forest and its people. Therefore, it took other countries to defend the construction of a sustainable model for the Amazon, since this was not a priority of the federal government.

As an example of this context, we had the aggravation of environmental and public security issues with the economic expansion of the borders of illegal mining, which brought irreparable damage to biodiversity and forest peoples. This process was part of a political-institutional relationship that was encouraged by the Federal Government in the last four years. This occurred through the flexibilization of environmental laws, the loosening of operations to combat illegal deforestation, and promises to miners to legalize their activities in Environmental Protection Territories, such as Indigenous Territories (TI – Territórios Indígenas) and Conservation Units (UC – Unidades de Conservação). There was also an increase in conflicts in the mining regions that live with the presence of drug trafficking, either in the drug trade or in the control of the entire gold exploration chain.

Map 3. International Amazon or Pan-Amazon



Fonte: Instituto Mãe Crioula (2023).

11. The World Drug Report 2023 brought a specific chapter on the Amazon and, in the document, studies emphasize the relationship between drug trafficking and environmental crimes, but it is worth mentioning that the Brazilian Forum on Public Security in partnership with the Research Group of Emerging Territories and Resistance Networks in the Amazon (TERRA), from the State University of Pará (UEPA), developed the research “Cartographies of violence in the Amazon region” (2022) being a pioneering study in making this relationship between drug trafficking and environmental crimes with a spatial focus on the Brazilian Amazon.

Map 3 above highlights the definition of international Amazon or Pan-Amazon, which is different from Legal Amazon, as evidenced. Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Guyanas, and Suriname form a large expanse of the Amazon rainforest. However, the greatest highlight is for Brazil with the Legal Amazon region, which corresponds to a larger territorial dimension. Therefore, discussions on cooperation between the Amazonian Countries should be resumed, as was signed in 1977, in the creation of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACT) proposed by Brazil, which aimed to strengthen the sovereignty of these states over the region. In 1998, the ACT was terminated through an amendment protocol that created the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO). However, multilateral relations between the ACTO countries are weak and must be reactivated to strengthen institutions and ensure social justice.

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Drug trafficking has become one of the biggest problems in the Amazon region today, considering the links established between it and other illegal activities, such as those related to environmental crimes like illegal mining. Moreover, there is also an internalization of the criminal factions of the Southeast in the states and municipalities of the region, as well as the emergence of local and regional factions. These groups impose rhythms of control and coercion on the population and threaten institutions.

Roughly speaking, it is important to emphasize the institutional fragility promoted by the past government, which made the inspection actions of federal agencies such as INCRA, IBAMA, ICMBIO, and FUNAI precarious¹², all of them equipped by the state, and with difficulties in facing the advance of environmental crimes and the invasion of indigenous lands. Therefore, I emphasize that these strategies were part of a political project based on the colonial-civilization model, whose goal was the destruction and maximum exploitation of the region’s natural resources for capital accumulation.

The resumption of the Amazon as a priority in the environmental agenda and in the state policies gains strength as environmental awareness grows about the political dimension of the importance of consolidating a model that achieves the balance between economic growth, ecological preservation, protection of culture, and guarantee of social justice through territorial rights: this is a precise definition of sustainable development.

The global ecological crisis announced since the meeting in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Rio-92) expresses the need to review resource exploitation formats, fuel uses, and food production models. It is necessary to value new productive arrangements that are connected with the ideals of sustainability.

International cooperation between the countries of the Pan-Amazon is a format for solving common problems but with respect to the specificities of each country in order to strengthen the states, in pursuit of a public security policy with respect to human rights and not to follow the model of the war on drugs, as happened in Colombia and Peru¹³ with Plan Colombia. Pan-Amazonian states must ensure sustainable development projects, with social inclusion, generation of employment and income based on forest services, and reduction of inequalities in access to health, education and housing, basic sanitation, and food security.

International cooperation in the construction of an institutional agenda on regional security is necessary because drug trafficking in the Amazon has three important characteristics that demonstrate an organizational structure of transnational connection, whose variability obeys the rules of operation of the markets. Thus, three levels of this structure stand out:

12. The National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform, the Brazilian Institute of Environment, the Chico Mendes Institute of Biodiversity, and the National Indian Foundation were fully equipped by the state, which made the work and actions of these institutions difficult, weakening the presence of the state in the region.

13. Plan Colombia, both in Colombia and Peru, had negative impacts on the environment, agriculture and the health of local populations, mainly due to the fumigation of coca plantations, which also ended up infecting the soil and even reaching other plantations, in addition to endangering the lives of thousands of consumers and ruining the businesses of many small producers. In addition, regarding the insecurity aspects, the US military presence in the Andean region has increased in order to control the social upheavals that come with the application of neoliberal policies, reinforcing processes of social exclusion and institutional violence against poorer populations.

1. The drug trafficking networks operating in the Amazon have a structure composed of interacting elements that involve connections starting from a South American exchange and, therefore, form “nodes” of a network among themselves that build paths or connections.
2. Drug trafficking networks in the Amazon form an unstable interconnection in time, as they involve the transition from a simple network to a complex network, given the importance of certain routes. This means there are always changes in the intensity of the flows, as the safest route and the most stable connections are always the best options.
3. Finally, the third element of the definition of drug trafficking networks in the Amazon is the modification of its structure, which obeys the market dynamics that dictate the rules of operation and control of the main routes that move drug flows in Brazil and the World, with the region as the main transit area.

In other words, it would be very naive not to consider all the possibilities that drug trafficking would find in connecting with other illegal activities in the Amazon, illicit acts involving illegal logging, and illegal mining in areas of environmental protection. This has made the performance of criminal organizations in the region more complex and dynamic.

Regional security is the result of a set of political strategies designed jointly and among the states of the region, in order to guarantee the installation of integrated public security and social development policies, with the purpose of curbing the dynamics of criminal activities, and strengthening the presence of the Union. It is in this sense that the convergence of national security policies must occur, that is, institutionalizing cooperation in defense of Pan-Amazonian countries, establishing partnerships with each other, and building mutual agendas.

Finally, defense would be one of the agendas of the integrated agenda with the presence of states, at the same time that it is possible to establish inclusive proposals for socioeconomic development and protection of the environment and traditional populations. The purpose would then be to advance toward a public security policy aimed at the preservation of life, the maintenance of public order, the preservation of the environment, and the sovereignty of National States.

4. Final considerations

As we have observed, drug trafficking networks stand out as a constant territorial challenge, as the use of Amazonian space by illegal networks occurs through articulations that weaken regional security structures. In addition, drug trafficking creates political, economic, social, and cultural impacts, and more recently, it has also been found to promote environmental and land implications that intensify violence in the region.

Regarding border security, in this text, I defend the principle of international cooperation involving Brazil and the other countries of the Pan-Amazon, as they face common problems related to drug trafficking and the presence of criminal factions in their territories. The search for an Amazonian agenda that can build effective tools to combat organized crime and overcome inequalities can take place from the integrative perspective of Amazonian countries, including integrated public security policies with a focus on regional security.

International cooperation in the Pan-Amazon can be an important strategy for sustainable development and defense of territories, with the ideals of social justice and sustainability on the agenda of security, as there is much to be done with regard to corrections to the uneven geographical development that instituted the emergence of areas of social instability generated from mining, land grabbing, illegal logging, the construction of hydroelectric plants, among others.

Finally, much has been said about violence and the presence of drug trafficking in the Amazon, but little attention has been paid to the connections that are established through economic activities that exploit the natural resources of the forest and its subsoil, such as timber and ores. This relationship is what has been potentiating the actions of organized crime over the region in recent years and stimulating the most varied social, territorial, and environmental conflicts, thus creating zones of instability and social vulnerability throughout the Amazon. ■

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