THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THE BIOCEANIC ROAD AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI) FROM A BRAZILIAN PERSPECTIVE ON CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT
The current changing in world dynamics leads to an increased complexity on countries relations. From this perspective, the article's general objective analyses the impact of Latin America and East Asia integration through the Bioceanic Corridor and the Belt and Road Initiative on illicit markets. The specific objectives focus on identifying complicating elements for regional security, stemming from the collaborative and competitive engagements of actors within illegal networks. The adopted methodology is predominantly qualitative, involving bibliographic review, document analysis and case studies based on data from academic and government documents, and reports from international organizations. The addressed topics include drug and weapons trafficking, infrastructure initiatives, regional and global interconnection, and their relations to the criminal phenomena in South America. From the results obtained, the article emphasizes the anticipatory dimension, providing preventive recommendations in international collaboration, standardization of informational capabilities through common data models in road logistics hubs, and the application of security protocols in maritime hubs, with emphasis on the ARESP methodology (*Risk Analysis with Emphasis on Port Security*), contributing to regional integration on global security, and proposing practical and collaborative measures to anticipate and mitigate potential challenges arising from the interconnection of illicit networks on a global scale.
Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative; Bioceanic corridor; transnational organized crime; Brazil; perspective.

RESUMO
As atuais mudanças na dinâmica mundial conduzem a um aumento na complexidade das relações entre os países. Nessa perspectiva, o objetivo geral do artigo analisa o impacto da integração da América Latina e do Leste Asiático por meio do Corredor Bioceânico e da Iniciativa Cinturão e Rota em mercados ilícitos. Os objetivos específicos se focam na identificação de elementos complicadores para a segurança regional, decorrentes do envolvimento colaborativo e competitivo de atores dessas redes ilegais. A metodologia adotada é predominantemente

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qualitativa, envolvendo revisão bibliográfica, análise documental e estudos de caso baseados em dados de documentos acadêmicos e governamentais, e relatórios de organismos internacionais. Os tópicos abordados incluem tráfico de drogas e armas, iniciativas de infraestrutura, interconexão regional e global, e suas relações com o fenômeno criminal na América do Sul. A partir dos resultados obtidos, o artigo enfatiza a dimensão antecipatória, fornecendo recomendações preventivas na colaboração internacional, a padronização de capacidades informacionais por meio de modelos de dados comuns em hubs logísticos rodoviários, e a aplicação de protocolos de segurança em hubs marítimos, com ênfase na metodologia ARESP (Análise de Riscos com Ênfase na Segurança Portuária), contribuindo para a integração regional na segurança global, e propondo medidas práticas e colaborativas para antecipar e mitigar potenciais desafios decorrentes da interconexão de redes ilícitas em um escala global.
Palavras-chave: *Belt and Road Initiative*; corredor Bioceânico; crime organizado transnacional; Brasil; perspectiva.

INTRODUCTION

The new world dynamics, generated by disruptive technologies in the information age and, more specifically, the fourth industrial revolution as a catalyst for change, currently underway (GITOC, 2021), exposes organizations to an exponential volume and speed of data and communications, redefining time, distance, borders and relationships between people, places, and countries.

In fact, an unprecedented opening of trade, finance, travel, communications, capital, information, and surveillance (Zuboff, 2019)[3] can be observed, bringing uncertainty and unpredictability at decision-making levels, creating volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous - V.U.C.A. (Mackey, 1992) global environments. More recently, with the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian war, a fragile, anxious, non-linear, and incompressible - B.A.N.I. (Cascio, 2018) reality has emerged.

From a geopolitical standpoint, the negative impact of this globalization creates opportunities for a wide expansion of criminal activity, by taking advantage of new technologies, logistics chains and the fragmentation of powers to infiltrate legal and illegal businesses, as well as political levels, showing contempt for modern nations.

[3] Surveillance capitalism can be defined as the use of computed and packaged behavioral data in a data driven, profit-making, surveillance–based economy to predict and advertise products, claiming that its use is undermining autonomy, and consequentially the democracy (Zuboff, 2019).

To these States, in contrast, the respect for territoriality and individual sovereignty established by the *Westphalian* order diminishes their capacity to regulate regional and international markets and spaces, except through international cooperation (UNODC,2023)[4]. Their power, once self-sufficient, shifts towards an uncontrolled political space, where objectives, courses and actions become ineffective when projected into a global scale, since its capacities remain confined to the local sphere (Bauman, 2007).

Thus, new informal power emerges, emancipated from individual States control capacity and expanded at transnational levels, giving rise to the threat of transnational criminal organizations. Convergent in their strategies, although fragmentary in actions, some of them affiliated with insurgent groups in collusion with other activities such as the terrorism, these organizations acquire great adaptability to follow the path of least resistance in their main objective: financial gains (Becker, 1995).

Indeed, the negative exploitation of these economic and geopolitical changes, and their now globally available assets, by organized criminal networks impacts on the development of certain areas of the globe, even with the permissiveness of criminalized States and governments (Farah, 2016), undermining defense, public security, and governance, thereby increasing regional challenges faced by countries. This study focuses on Latin America, with a particular emphasis on logistical integration and illegal markets from the perspective of Brazil.

TRANSPORT INTEGRATION IN SOUTH AMERICA

The recent logistical integration of Latin American countries finds its origins in the 2000 meeting of South American presidents held in Brasilia, Brazil. On the occasion, the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America - IIRSA (*Iniciativa para la integración de la Infraestructura Regional Suramericana*) was established, to promote physical infrastructure and logistical

[4] Antonio Maia Costa, executive director of UNODC in the year 2010 defines this statement as *"crime has gone global, purely national responses are inadequate: they displace the problem from one country to another. Regional and international responses (…) make information-sharing compulsory"* (UNODC, 2010).

integration among 12 countries of the region: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Subsequent meetings, in 2008, led to the formation of the Union of South American Nations – UNASUR (*Unión de Naciones Suramericanas*), establishing performance and sectoral cooperation through ministerial-level councils composed of infrastructure and planning ministers. Notably, IIRSA was incorporated as a technical forum of the South American Council for Infrastructure and Planning – COSIPLAN.

To accomplish its objectives, UNASUR seeks to promote integration and consensus among its member through political dialogue and policies related to social, education, energy, infrastructure, financing, and environmental common issues; eradicating inequality, promoting social inclusion and citizen engagement, enhancing democracy, and diminishing disparities while reinforcing the sovereignty and independence of nations (UNASUR, 2008).

As part of this effort, a specific objective related to infrastructure, guided by sustainable social and economic development principles, involves the establishment of an Integration Priority Project Agenda - API, selected in consensus by UNASUR members. The API focuses on identifying and selecting structured projects that contributes to regional interconnection. The projects may encompass national, binational and/or multinational initiatives funded by government, the private sector, or multilateral financial institutions, such as the Inter-American Development Bank - IADB, the Andean Development Corporation - CAF, the Financial Fund for the Development of the La Plata Basin - FONPLATA, or the World Bank (UNASUR, 2017).

COSIPLAN´s territorial integration plans are organized around the concept of Integration and Development Axes – EIDs *(Ejes de Integración y Desarrollo*): strips of interconnected territories articulated by transit, energy grid and communication networks, that facilitate the exchange of goods, services, people and information both within the region and internationally. In total, ten EIDs were identified for the South America: Andean, Southern Andean, Capricorn, Paraguay-Paraná Waterway, Amazonas, Guiana Shield, South, Central Interoceanic, Mercosur-Chile, and Peru-Brazil-Bolivia, graphically depicted as follows.

Figure 1 - Ten Integration and Development Hubs for South America.

Source: UNASUR, 2017, p. 167.

On this framework, four of the Integration and Development Axes establish connections between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans: Amazon axis, Central Interoceanic axis, Capricorn axis and *Mercosul*-Chile axis, which territories are described by IIRSA as follows.

Figure 2 - Axes of Integration between the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean.

	Amazon axis: Cover the countries of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil. Has more than 6,000 km of waterways, covering an area of about 4.5 million km^2
	Central Interoceanic axis: Encompasses eight departments in Bolivia, five states in Brazil, the first region in Chile, all of Paraguay and three provinces in Peru, comprising a range of approximately 3.3 million km^2.
	Capricorn axis: Cover regions of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, southern Bolivia and northern Chile, comprising an area of approximately 1.72 million km^2.
	MERCOSUR-Chile axis: Encompasses all of Uruguay, central Chile, central and northwestern Argentina, part of southeastern and southern Brazil and southeastern Paraguay. It covers an area of approximately 3.1 million km^2.

Source: adapted from IIRSA, 2009, as cited in BNDES, 2010, p. 61.

Concerning the field of transport, IIRSA seeks to prioritize the articulation and conformation of multimodal networks (land, river, sea, and air), facilitating the cross-border transit of people, vehicles, and cargo by expanding and modernizing the physical infrastructure in South America. As important sources of information for this work, the *Comunicado de Brasilia* (Brasil, 2010) highlights:

The inventory of priority projects for the Integration of South America, approved at the Conference of Ministers of Transport, Communications and Public Works in South America.

The master plan for transport and infrastructure for South America, prepared by ALADI within the framework of the Conference of Ministers of Transport, Communications and Public Works in South America.

The activities of the multilateral working group on Terrestrial Bioceanic Corridors.

The work carried out within the framework of the Plata Basin Treaty and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, with a view to integrating transport networks.

Regarding the works on Terrestrial Bioceanic Corridors, a study conducted in 2010 by Brazil´s National Bank for Economic and Social Development – BNDES (*Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social*), points the best logistical configuration linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by railways as an association of the Capricorn and MERCOSUR-Chile axis, referring to the potential demand captured by each axis itself resulting “in a configuration with complementarity and greater service for the implementation of the rail link between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans” (BNDES, 2010, p. 222). Nevertheless, IIRSA's initiatives considers two modal possibilities: by rails with the Transoceanic Railroad project, and/or by roads with the Pacific Highway Road.

LOGISTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN BRAZIL AND POSSIBLE EXPANSION

In order to fulfill the object of this study, it is of paramount importance to examine the current state and future prospect of multimodal transport networks in South America, with Brazil as a starting point. Currently, a great imbalance in cargo transportation matrices can be seen in the country, with highways corresponding to approximately 61% of the total, while railways are close to 21% and shipping around 13.5%. The three models, together, are responsible for about 95.4% of all cargo transported in the country (CNT, 2022), the remainder being by air.

As a country of continental proportions, with approximately 1.4 million kilometers of dry border strips, accounting for about 16.7% of the total, surrounded by ten countries, it is reasonable to assume that a majoritarian use of railways for production transport flow makes sense from an economic point of view. Despite the significant investment required, the economies of scale resulting from the transportation of large quantities of goods bring scale economy, cost efficiency and rationality in the long-term, when compared to road transport.

These assertive gains even more expression when considering Brazil´s strong reliance on agribusiness exports, moving massive quantities of grains across its territory. Building upon this premise, IIRSA's study entitled *"Inputs to elaborate a strategy that facilitates the railroad integration of South America"* (IIRSA, 2017) foresees potential railways routes that can be established to interlink Brazil with South America countries, providing access to the Pacific Ocean.

Figure 3 - Corridors of railroad integration.

ROUTE	TERMINOLOGY	COUNTRIES INVOLVED
Brazil-Peru	CFBBP	Brazil-Peru
Bioceanic *Paranaguá-Antofagasta*	CFBPA	Brazil-Paraguay-Argentina-Chile
Central Bioceanic	CFBC	Brazil-Paraguay-Argentina-Chile (or Peru)

Source: Adapted from IIRSA, 2017, p. 17

The Brazil-Peru Bioceanic Railroad Corridor – CFBBP (*Corredor Ferroviário Bioceânico Brazil-Peru*), involves the creation of a railroad corridor connecting the Brazilian ports of *Ilhéus* in the state of *Bahia*, *Santos* in the State of *São Paulo*, and/or the *Açú Port* in *Rio de Janeiro* to the Peruvian port of *Bayóvar* on the Pacific side. The project utilizes the existing Brazilian North-South railroad, and the proposed path is outlined as follows.

Figure 4 - The Brazil-Peru Bioceanic Railroad Corridor (CFBBP).

Source: author, based on IIRSA, 2017.

The section to be constructed has a total length of approximately 2,400 km within Brazilian territory. Starting in *Campinorte*, state of *Goiás*, the rail passes through Mato Grosso, Rondônia and Acre until reaching Peru. In the Peruvian portion, it extends for around 1,600 km thru the Amazon and Andean region until reaching the Pacific Ocean, with a total of approximately 4,900 km (VALEC, 2023).

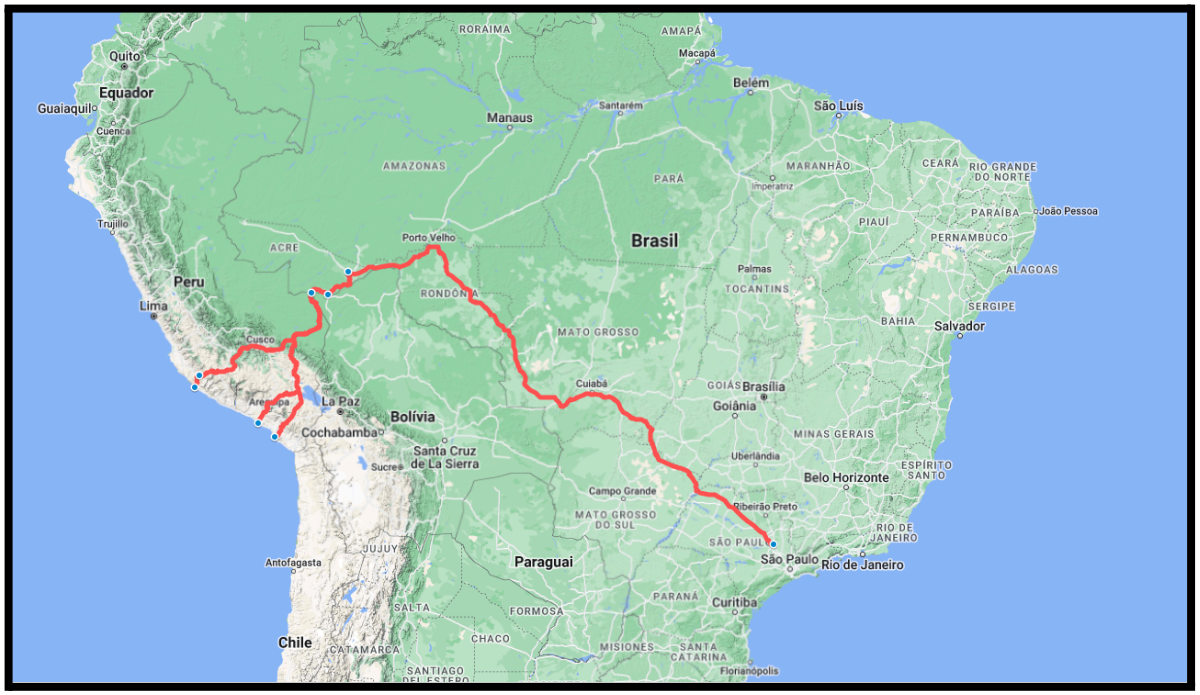
Initially proposed in 2014, the construction was declared technically feasible in accordance with a study made by *Bo Qiang*, from China Railway *Eryuan* Engineering Group Co. (Brasil, 2017). The total estimated costs range between US$ 10 billion (MASSA, 2020) and US$ 50 billion (Brasil, 2017), depending on the source and year of the study. It is anticipated that the project can be carried out by a State joint venture or a common investment fund between Brazil and China.

However, the project has encountered several challenges at its current stage, such as the Peruvian government's preference that the route pass through the Andean region, which holds political significance to the country, but is located at 4,000 meters above sea level, adding approximately US$ 4,2 billion to the budget.

Another challenge concerns the difference between the Brazilian and Peruvian rail gauges, requiring adaptation and additional resources. Dialogues regarding the project have slowed down between 2019 and 2022 due to political changes in Brazil and political instability in Peru.

Furthermore, a road modal connection already exists between Brazil and Peruvian ports. The trajectory begins in *São Paulo*, Brazil, as BR-364, continuing to *Rio Branco* and *Assis Brasil* in the state of Acre designated as BR-317. From there, it passes through Cobija, Bolivia, before reaching *Iñapari*, in Peru. Within Peru, the *"Carretera Interoceanica"* splits into two other roads: PE-030 to the west, leading to Nazca and Puerto de *San Juan de Marcona*; and to the South, dividing into two additional roads, being PE-034 to *Puerto de Matarani*, and PE-036 to *Puerto de Ilo*.

Figure 5 - Existing connection between Brazil and Peruvian ports.



Source: author, based on IIRSA, 2017.

Designed to enhance regional integration and facilitate Brazilian exports, the "Pacific Highway" is expected to bring development to the cities along its route. However, data on Acre´s international trade flow from 2008 to 2020 indicates a low usage of the route, with only around 16.7% on the total period.

Between 2015 to 2020, the participation slightly increased 22%, mainly driven by the export nuts, corn, soy, and fish from Brazil to Peru, as well as the import of plastic, polymer products, utensils, machinery, and equipment from China, passing thru Peru (Brasil, 2023).

The idle use of these routes with formal economic purpose represents a great risk, insofar it reduces the interest of the government agencies on controlling and supervising its paths, bringing a great vulnerability to Brazil, since, as established by UNODC, Bolivia and Peru pose as two of the main three countries responsible for drug production on South America (UNODC, 2023).

The second project proposed by IIRSA is the *Paranaguá-Antofagasta* Bioceanic Railroad Corridor – CFBPA (*Corredor Ferroviário Bioceânico Paranaguá-Antofagasta*), also known as the Capricorn Multimodal Bioceanic corridor. The object is to implement a railway corridor linking the ports of *Paranaguá* in *Paraná*, Brazil, to the Port of *Antofagasta* on the Pacific Ocean in Chile.

On the Brazilian side, *Paraná* already has a railway line from the port of *Paranaguá* to the city of *Cascavel*, and the project involves expanding the railway stretch to the city of *Foz do Iguaçu*, located on the triple border between Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina. From there, the corridor extends through Paraguay and Argentina before reaching Chile.

In Argentina, there are three state-owned and three private companies that already connects to the major grain transportation hubs in southern Brazil (MASSA, 2023). In Chile, the rail network shows stable demand, mainly focused on mining in the north and passenger services in the southern part, which are predominantly state-owned. In Paraguay, the railway system is currently inactive, requiring large amounts of investments.

The construction of the corridor would provide better access to Asian markets from Brazil and the other countries, with an estimated reduction of 30% in costs and 23% in travel time for the transportation of cargo from Brazil to China. Despite this, reports from 2017 by COSIPLAN´s IIRSA (IIRSA, 2017) indicate that the investments required to advance this project would not be a priority by the governments of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. Conversations are ongoing within the scope of the Working Group on Railway Integration to identify issues and long-term planning.

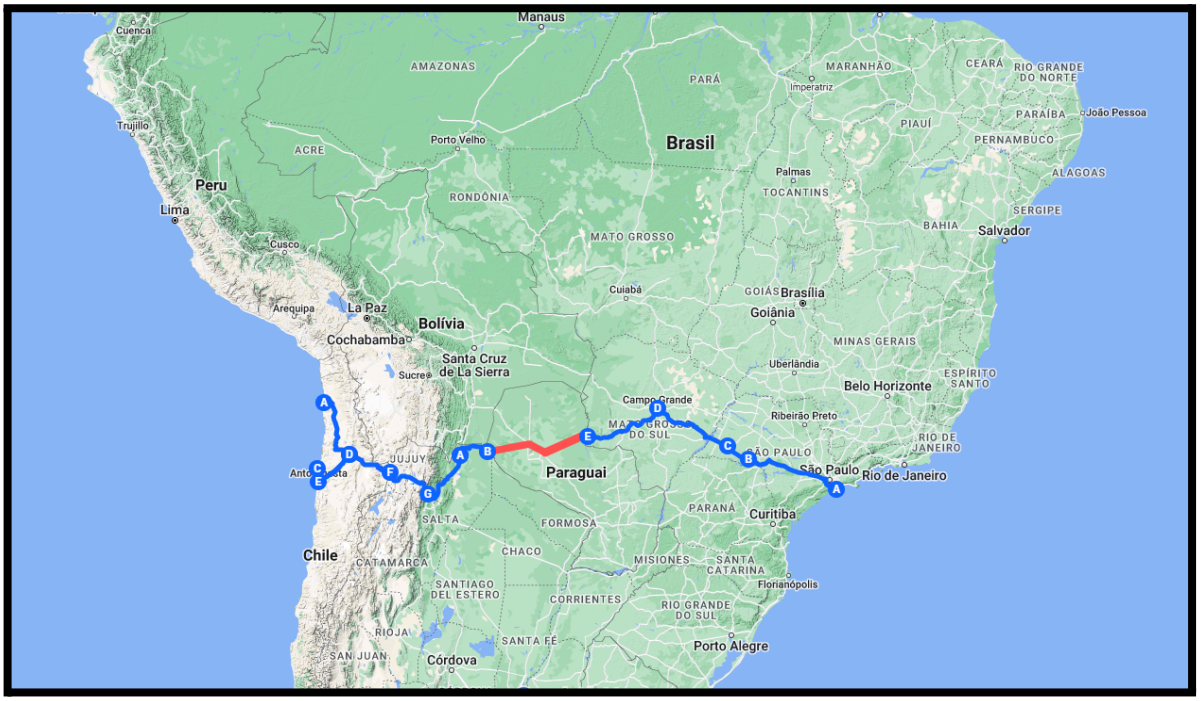
As a result of the lack of priority on both projects seen above, the CFBBP and the CFBPA, the Central Bioceanic Corridor – CFBC (*Corredor Ferroviário Bioceânico Central*), appears as a prolific integration project in South America, aiming to connect the East and West Coast through a railroad between the ports of *Santos*, in *São Paulo*, and the ports of *Antofagasta*, *Mejillones* and/or *Arica,* in Chile, or *Matarani*, in Perú.

However, considering the technical study on Bioceanic corridors conducted in 2010 by the Brazilian´s National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES, 2010), which describes a consensus that roads are the primary mode of transportation in Latin America and the low usage of railroads based on the existence of bottlenecks or missing links, an alternative to the project emerges, utilizing roads.

Referred as the Pacific Highway Road, also known as Interoceanic Road or Latin American Integration Route*,* the project was established during the Brasilia declaration on bi-oceanic corridors (Brasil, 2017) with the presence of the presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile. The initiative foresees the integration and convergence between *Mercosur* and the Pacific Alliance by establishing improved highway connections among the countries, facilitating the logistic flow and reducing transportation time and costs.

In development, the project assumes a trajectory that begins in *São Paulo*, passing through *Campo Grande* and *Porto Murtinho*, extending through *Carmelo Peralta, Mariscal Estigarribia, Boquerón, and Pozo Hondo* in Paraguay. In Argentina, it encompasses the cities of *Misión La Paz, Tartagal, Jujuy,* and *Salta* and, in Chile, it traverses *Sico* and *Jama*, reaching the ports of *Antofagasta*, *Mejillones*, and *Iquique*.

Figure 6 - the Pacific Highway Road.



Source: author, based on IIRSA, 2017.

A significant portion of the roads are already paved, mainly in Chile, Argentina, and Brazil, as shown by the blue routes on the map. The Paraguayan trajectory from *Carmelo Peralta* to *Loma Plata* are currently in design phase pre-execution (Regionalismos, 2023), with other concessions and works at an implementation stage. According to data from March 2023, 19% of the International Bridge between *Carmelo Peralta*, in Paraguay, and *Porto Murtinho*, in Brazil has been completed (Bioceânica, 2021). The bridge completion is scheduled for December 2024.

ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS

Regardless of the chosen route and mode of transportation, the establishment of a Bioceanical Route between the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean will lead to physical and cultural integration among the Latin America countries. This integration will bring numerous benefits to the region, such as the reduction in shipping time to the West Coast of United States, Oceania and East of Asia, improving logistics and increasing the competitiveness of Latin American exports.

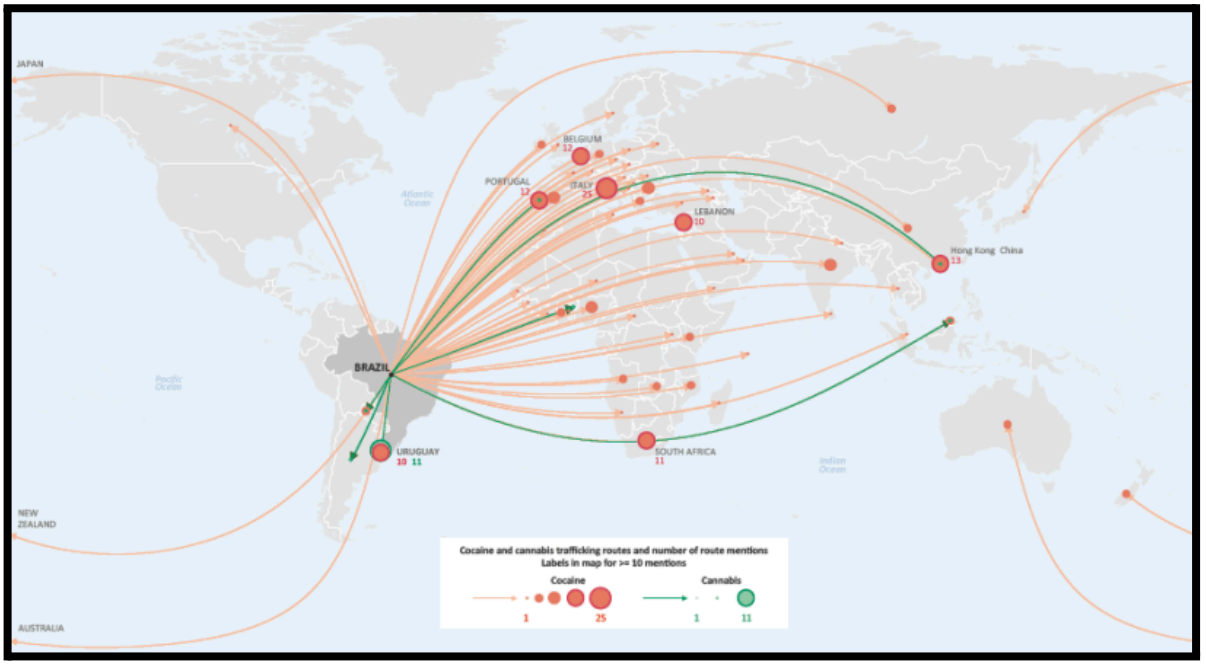
However, it is important to consider the specific context of Brazil, which has an historically fragile border. Frequently exploited as a pathway for illicit activities originated in some of its neighboring countries, such as Bolivia, Colombia and Peru in narcotics production or Paraguay is associated with smuggling and illegal trade (UNODC, 2023), these challenges must be taken into account and addressed to ensure the successful implementation and operation of a Bioceanic Route.

ILLEGAL MARKETS IN BRAZIL: GUNS, DRUGS AND CIGARETTES

In concern to arms trafficking, a market evaluation in Brazil implies an attractiveness of general financial gain from illegal trade with the country, especially considering the highest comparative price of the region for long arms, of up to US$ 15,000 for an assault rifle and $12,500 for 5.56*mm* caliber parts and kits (UNODC, 2020). Besides, there is a constant demand of arms by local factions, in their need for territorial armed control, as can be seen in some slums ("*favelas*").

Regarding to drug trafficking, the use of Brazilian territory make sense as a distribution hub and logistical channel for marijuana and cocaine from Latin America producers to markets in Europe, Africa (representing 70% of seizures from 2015 to 2020) and Asia (representing 46% of seizures from Latin America from 2015 to 2020), with the mainly modal used being maritime.

Figure 7 - Cocaine and cannabis trafficking routes from Brazil, 2010-2022.



Source: UNODC, 2023, p. 83

Converging to this conjuncture, the domestic drug consumer market in the country has grown in recent years, being the largest consumer of cocaine and its derivatives in Latin America, and one of the largest consumers in the world, especially if considered the consumption of Crack (UNODC, 2022).

Regarding the smuggling of cigarettes, an option for this crime in Brazil in detriment of drug or arms trafficking on recent years is greatly influenced by national criminal laws, since smuggling is punishable by imprisonment from 2 to 5 years (double if committed with the use of transport), while international drug trafficking is punished with 5 to 15 years in prison, plus one sixth to two thirds if the nature, origin and circumstances of the crime evidence the transnational nature of the crime. (Brasil, 1940).

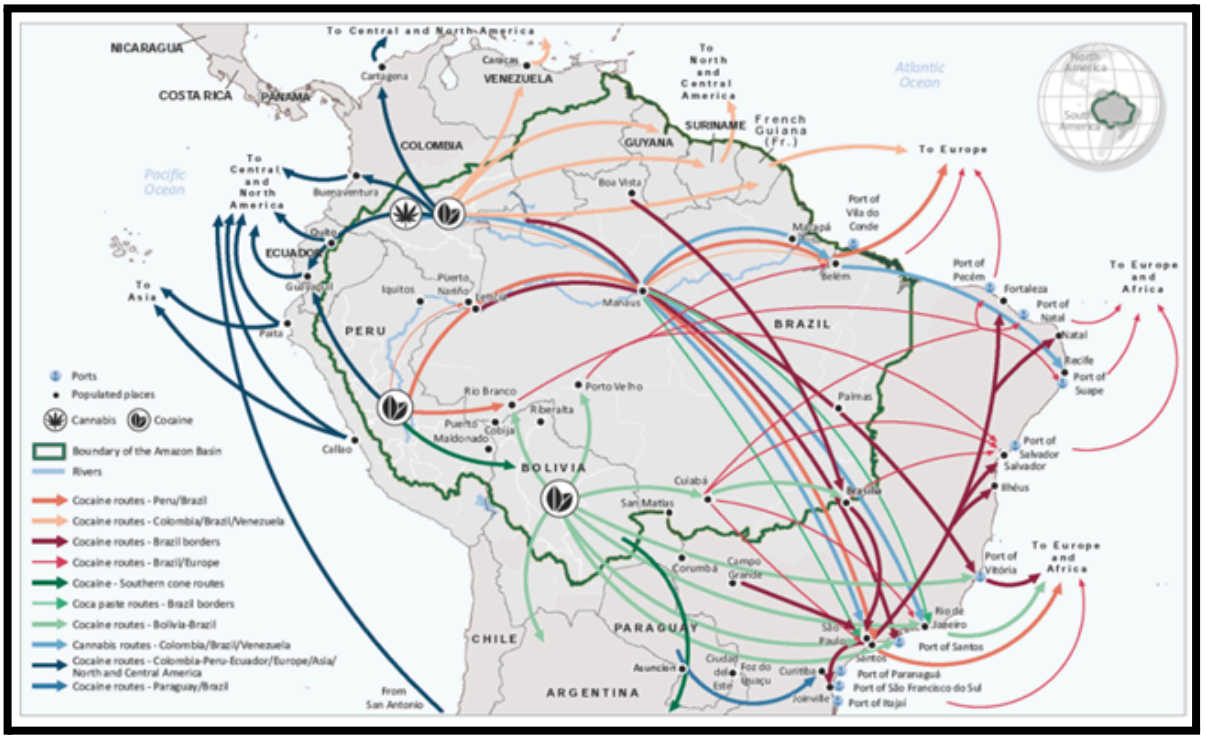
This statement finds foundation on the economic theory of crime, when considering not only the main criminal objective as the financial reward, but also that the probability of being caught and the uncertainty and severity of punishment influence their choice (Becker, 1995). In this way, the option for the crime of misdirection can bring better cost-benefit rationality to criminal actors.

In accordance with the stated, some illicit flows have represented major problems to Brazil, based on its territorial extend, geographical position, and some institutional weaknesses. These issues, with emphasis on certain regions, bring difficulties in monitoring and controlling borders, contributing in complexity to transnational illicit activities that utilizes and directly impacts in Brazil.

THE BRAZIL-PERU BORDER

Peru borders the Brazilian states of *Acre* and *Amazonas*, with an extension of approximately 2,995.3 km², of which 2,000 km are by water channels, 283.5 km by conventional lines and 708.7 km by waterway dividers (Brasil, 2022). The main regional problems associated with crimes are drug trafficking, illegal mining, fishing, hunting and wood smuggling, facilitated by its proximity to some of the main world drug producers. This reality can be better seen in the recent map by UNODC (2023) that shows selected drug trafficking routes in the Amazon Basin.

Figure 8 - Selected drug trafficking routes in the Amazon Basin.



Source: UNODC, 2023, p. 80

Following this reality, criminal factions operate in the border region, such as the *Comando Vermelho* (C.V.), *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (P.C.C.), *Bonde dos* 13, and IFARA - Brotherhood, Active Force, and *Acre* Responsibility (*Irmandade Força Ativa Responsabilidade Acreana*) in the state of *Acre* (FBSP, 2022). In *Amazonas*, criminal groups such as *Família de Coari, Família do Norte*, and *"os crias*" are active, making the rate of lethal violence in the Legal Amazon region 40.8% higher than in other Brazilian regions. Therefore, the expansion P.C.C. and C.V. towards Peruvian territory has been documented, with at least four leaders of the faction C.V. already present in the country (Apublica.org, 2022). A recent study published by UNODC shows the ecosystem of these groups in the Amazon Basin Region.

Figure 9 - Ecosystem of drug trafficking groups in the Amazon Basin.

Source: adapted from UNODC, 2023, p. 89

On this region and specific context, one faction of paramount importance on this context is *"os crias,"* an economic union of Brazilian, Peruvian, and Colombian factions, transporting timber, gold, animals, cocaine, and skunk from Peru and Colombia through the connection of the Javari River with *Solimões*. From there, the illicit goods are then transported to larger factions situated in the Southeast of Brazil, such as Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo.

THE BRAZIL-PARAGUAY BORDER

Specifically on the Brazil-Paraguay border, the difficulty involves administering 28 border municipalities between the two countries[5]. Therefore, the *modus operandi* of illegal organizations on this area involves illegal logistic chains that uses vulnerabilities associated with a total extension of 1,365.4 km, being 928.5 km of rivers, and 436.9 km of water dividers (FUNAG, 2023), making it difficult to control their illegal activities.

Currently, an illegal flow of drugs is already established in the region, with Paraguay as a significant issue when it comes to marijuana production, and as an intermediate route for cocaine produced in Andean Countries, especially Peru and Bolivia (UNODC, 2023). On the opposite direction, an illegal flow of dirty money, violence and, of greater common concern, the expansion of criminal organizations from Brazil is observable, such as the *"Primeiro Comando da Capital"* (P.C.C.) or the *"Comando Vermelho"* (C.V.) towards Paraguay, and beyond, contributing to the growth of organized criminal networks.

This border is also notorious for contraband and smuggling, with a continuous influx of counterfeit goods, firearms, and cigarettes. Still, although recent police operations seizures of cigarettes[6] ratify the participation of these factions on these crimes, they also indicate a shift on the illegal cigarettes market in central regions of Brazil, such as *Rio de Janeiro* or *São Paulo*, as evidenced by the increase in confiscation of domestic brands.

[5] The cited municipalities borders are: in *Mato Grosso do Sul, Sete Quedas and Corpus Christi; Aral Moreira, PedroJuan Caballero and Captain Bado; Bela Vista and Bella Vista North; Caracol and San Carlos del Apa; Colonel Sapucaia and Captain Bado; Japorã and Guairá Falls; Paranhos and Ypejú; Ponta Porã and Pedro Juan Caballero; Porto Murtinho, Carmelo Peralta and San Lazaro. In Paraná: Foz do Iguaçu and Ciudad del Este; President Franco and Hernandárias, Santa Helena and Puerto Índio, Guaíra* and *Novo Mundo and Salto del Guairá*.
[6] Like the Brazilian Federal Police operations *"Fumus"*, in 2021, or *"Smoke Free"* in 2022.

The main company reportedly involved in these crimes is located in *Rio de Janeiro*, a region dominated by the *Comando Vermelho* and the local militia and has debts of more than one billion *"reais",* approximated US$ 201.690.400,00 (FNCP, 2021), with the customs, without having their records removed due to judicial decisions that have lasted for more than 14 years. These facts, together, strongly suggest a growth in the use of the national illicit cigarette on this market, generating idle space on the illegal routes established between Brazil and Paraguay.

The extrapolation of this study is that such relocation can bring a vacuum on this specific chain, creating a gap that can increase other illegal products, such as weapons and drugs. Otherwise, the possible substitution of logistics actors in this network may present competitive opportunities to the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (P.C.C.) in its objective of international expansion.

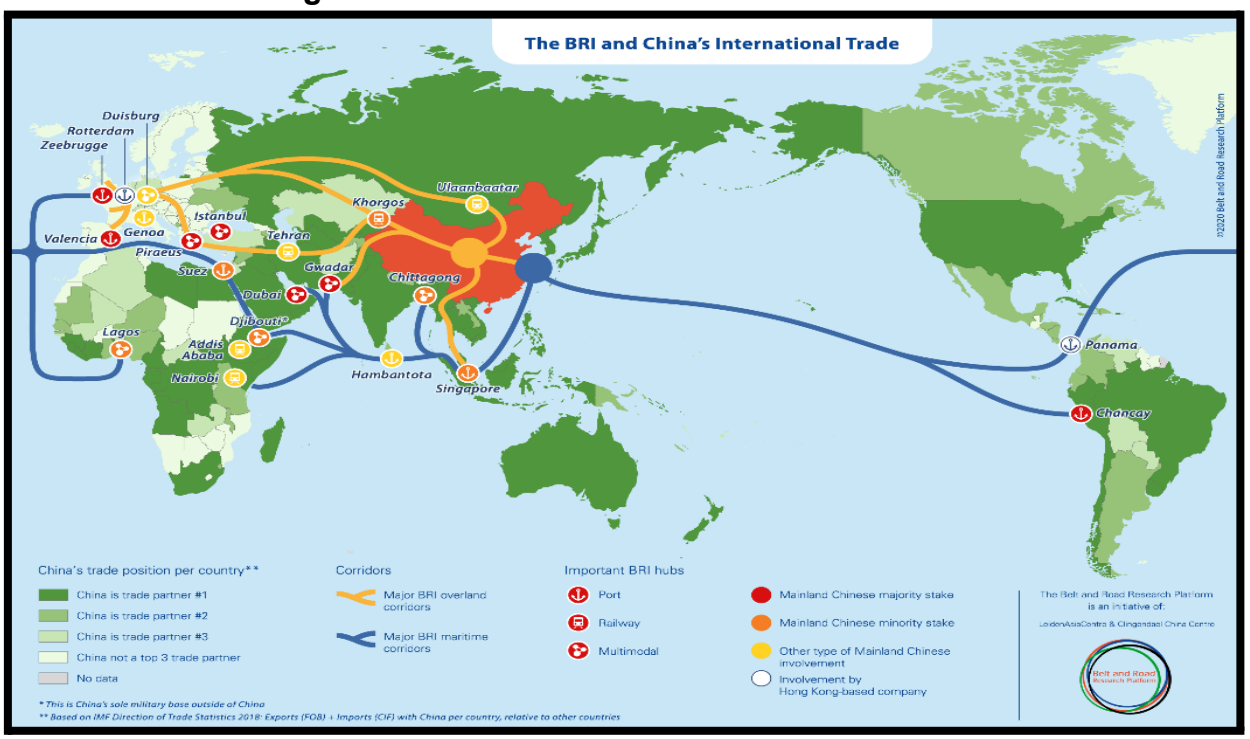
On this point, it must be highlighted the business vision of P.C.C., based in the criminal economy, and the presence of a specialized structure for this purpose: the denominated *Sintonia do cigarro* (tuning of the cigarette, in english).

MODAL TRANSPORT INTEGRATION – THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

In addition to conducting a geopolitical analysis of the Latin American logistics chain for the upcoming years, the potential access to the Pacific Ocean assured to the countries within the block, especially Brazil, by any of the planned models of Bioceanic Route as previously discussed, increases the attractiveness for commercial flows between the region and the West Coast of United States, Oceania and with East of Asia countries, such as China and Russia.

As a matter of fact, China already has expressed its intention to establish new trade routes globally, through the project called China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also referred as The Silk Road of the XXI Century or New Silk Road. An ambitious infrastructure project launched in 2013, BRI initially focused on developing and approximating East Asia to Europe and Africa. In 2017, the country began to sign agreements of understanding with countries of Central America, the Caribbean and South America (Ferchen, 2021). Furthermore, the presence of a maritime trade route from China to Latin America is already evident on projected maps, arriving at the port of *Chancay*, in Peru.

Figure 10 - The BRI and China´s International Trade.



Source: UL, 2021

From the previously analysis on this study, the appearance of the Port of *Chancay* on the map stands out as a projection from China towards South America. However, it is important to note that Bioceanic corridors offer multiple potential routes, and the final destination may not be limited to this specific point. As potential ports considered potential: In Peru, *Bayovar*, with the transoceanic railroad *Marcona*, *Matarani* and/or *Ilo* through the already built "*Carretera Interoceanica*"; in Chile, in *Antofagasta*, *Mejillones* and/or *Iquique*, with the construction of the central Bioceanic railway corridor or the pacific highway road.

Within this context, several Latin American countries have already expressed their interest in the initiative. In 2018, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia and Uruguay expressed their interest in the initiative; followed by Peru, in 2019, and Argentina, in 2022.

Regardless of Brazil's current stance, the engagement of the newly elected government with the East Asian bloc, particularly Russia and China, through visits and alignment, suggests a potential interest in utilizing the Silk Route trajectory.

From an economic point of view for Brazil, the use of the Bioceanic route, with access to the Pacific Ocean in integration to the BRI benefits the export of its main products to buyer markets in Asia and Oceania. The real importance of the theme can be perceived when considering that, in the last 13 years, China has been Brazil's largest trade partner. Only in the year 2022, China represented the main destination of Brazilian exports, with a record of US$150 billion in transactions, with a surplus of US$29 billion in favor of Brazil (BBC, 2023). Brazilian agribusiness alone has moved an amount of US$ 50.79 billion, about 31.9% of total Brazilian exports (Ghobril; Angelo; Oliveira, 2023).

Even during the pandemic of Covid-19, the Brazil-China trade grew by 6.8%. China demands large quantities of commodities produced in Brazil, such as soybeans, oil, iron ore, cellulose, meat, petroleum derivatives, sugar, and is the country that owes most to Brazil, with US$ 34 billion last year. Only in the Mato Grosso do Sul States, 45.4% of the production (US$ 2.6 billion) is destined to China (Center, 2020).

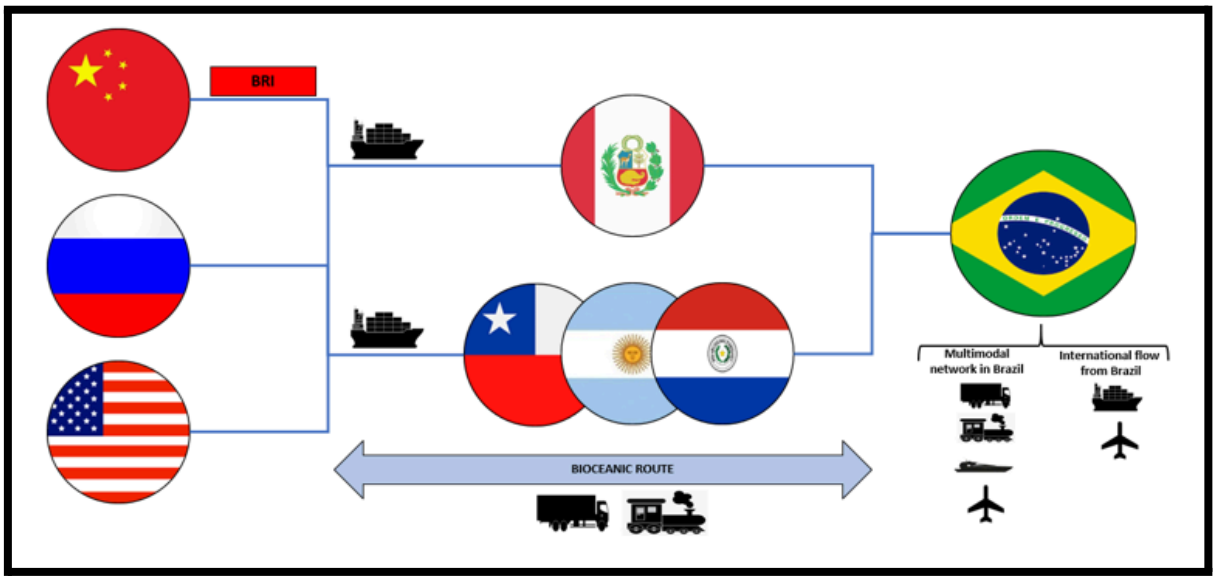
From a Chinese point of view, the insertion of Brazil to the BRI represents more a political act of influence than an economic act, since Brazil depends on the exportation of commodities to the county, and is already one of the biggest destinations for Chinese investments. This proximity can be seen with concern by the United States, since the initiative includes the exclusion of dollars as an economic ballast, by removing it in the trade balance between both countries (BBC, 2023).

Facilitating this bilateral relationship, there was the creation on March 20, 2023, of a Clearing House operated by the ICBC - Industrial and Commercial Bank of China for trade between Brazil and China without dollar conversion. This strategic alignment opens up opportunities for enhanced trade and connectivity between Brazil and China, highlighting the potential significance of Brazil's role in the new BRI framework.

POSSIBLE NEW WORLD ROUTE OF THE XXI CENTURY

From the perspective of complementarity between the Bioceanic Route and its possible integration to the Belt Road Initiative towards China, the projection of this study is that a new flow from South America to East Asia is estimated to be established in the coming years. This flow is expected to involve multimodal and multilateral transportation, presented through one of the frameworks proposed below.

Figure 11 - Expected commercial routes to Latin America in the upcoming years.



Source: elaborated by the author.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS

Although the connection between the East and West coast of South America represents an increase of maritime navigation slots and a possible reduction in the number of logistics chains from Brazil and Latin America to markets of Asia, Oceania and West Coast of the United States, there are associated risks.

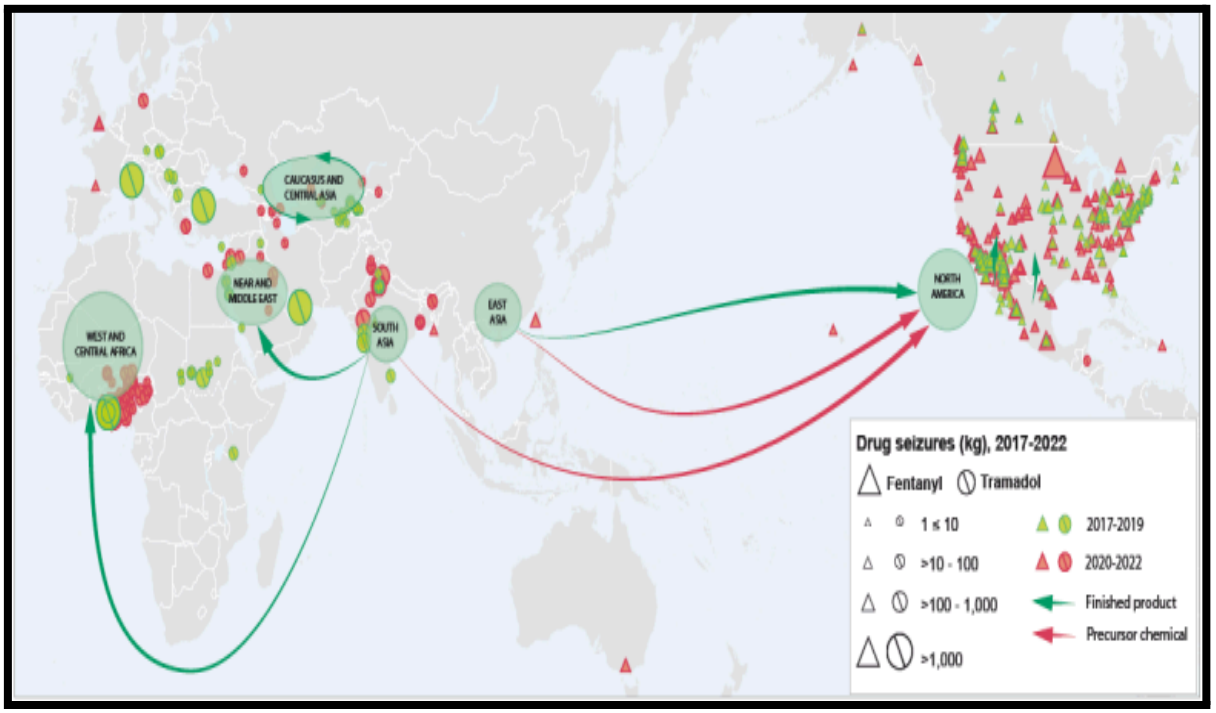
Due to the vulnerability created by the capillarity of routes and multiplicity of actors from different markets brought together, it is anticipated the creation of an environment conducive to the growth of illicit activities. The crescent logistical potential in illegal trade in arms, drugs and contraband, as well as a potential expansion of actors beyond the individual borders of countries is expected to accompany this growth.

As a mere example, the approach of Latin America gangs and factions to the illegal arms market from China and/or Russia can be highlighted, since the second

country appears as one of the main origins of arms seized in the world (UNODC, 2023). In this point, it is paramount the observation and monitoring in the coming years concerns illegal introduction of these weapons in South America through trafficking, increasing the violence associated with transnational criminal organizations - TCOs, in the region.

Another possible concern involves China being pointed out as a global source of opiates and essential chemical precursors for the manufacture of fentanyl, a current major problem throughout the Americas (Realuyo, 2019). Since the Bioceanic Route concedes maritime access not only to East Asia, but also to the West Coast of the United States, there's a possibility that this logistical flow could be utilized as an intermediate point, similarly to how Mexico is currently used, as shown in the following map.

Figure 12 - Fentanyl and Tramadol seizures over 1 kg in weight, 2017-2022

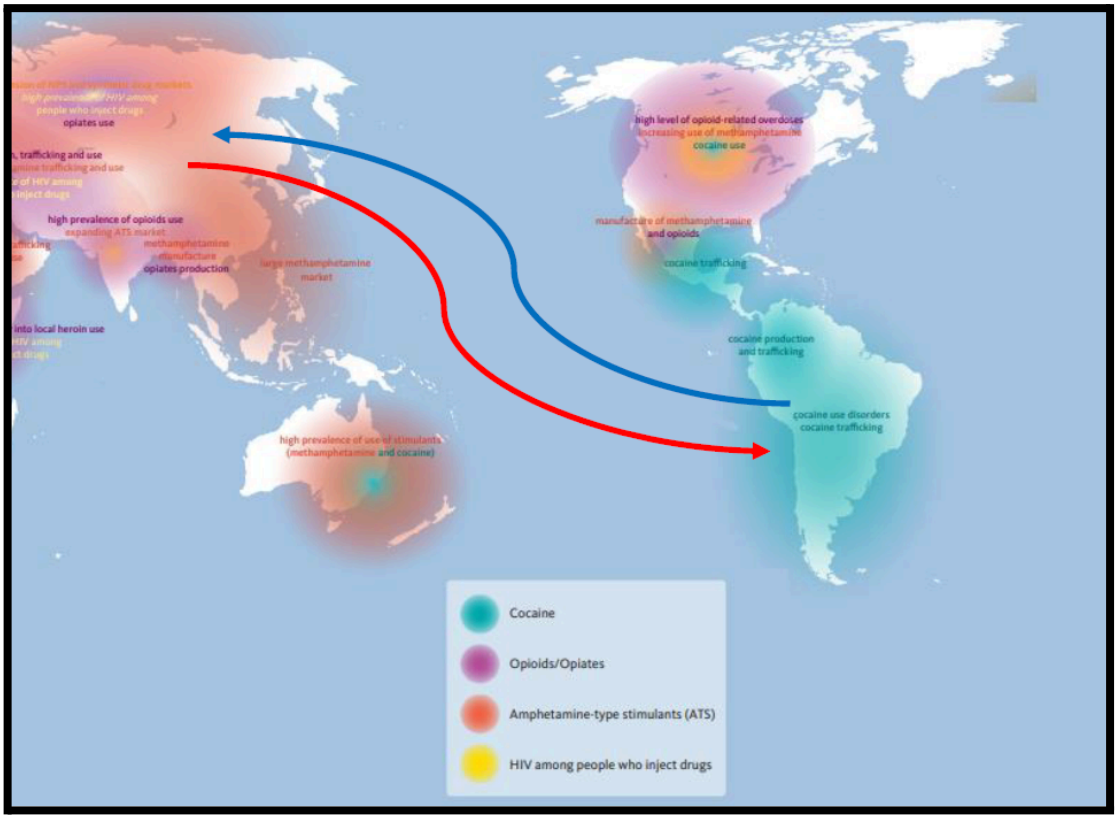


Source: UNODC, 2023, p. 14

Such projection allows the prediction of an increase in the supply of opioids, such as fentanyl in South America itself and beyond, using the Bioceanic Route in continuation of the BRI as a transit route to Europe and Africa. In the other direction, there's facilitated access to East Asia, Oceania, and the West coast of the United Stated to cocaine, increasing its global demand.

Used to see the world with an orientation centered on the Atlantic, a change on this orientation translates the magnitude of this issue, since East Asia appears as a heat area for Amphetamine-type stimulants - ATS on the globe (UNODC, 2023), while South America is, by far, the highlighted heat area for Cocaine, as follows.

Figure 13 - Heat map of world drug production with a Center-Pacific orientation.



Source: author, adapted from UNODC, 2023, p. 18.

Another projection includes a possible increase in local violence in South America based on arms availability and/or the search for controlling these news routes, creating a competitive environment between South American factions with each other and/or with new illegal actors from Asia, Oceania, and the United States with ideals not necessarily convergent.

Finally, and without the intention of exhausting the threats associated with the subject, if considering the opposite direction and reverse use of this potential new logistics chain, it is possible to establish illegal trade pacts between the TCOs present in South America, especially in Brazil, such as the P.C.C. and C.V., with consumer markets or other criminal groups, exporting their illicit business models and influence to other Latin American countries, and overseas.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The complexity and interplay of the factors studied contribute to the heightened risk of illegal activities and the need for robust monitoring and enforcement measures. As possible actions to mitigate and confront the identified problems, the involvement of political levels and policymakers is initially required, increasing the political cooperation and integration in Latin America, especially between Peru, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil.

This collaborative approach addresses the challenges in the involved borders with a convergence of efforts, impacting common strategies, enhanced security and promotes regional development, while also prioritizing citizenship and integration in the public agenda. Thus, an increase in efficient cooperation between national security, public security and human security institutions is seen as necessary, both internally and internationally in the countries of the bloc.

It is projected that such convergence must address not only issues addressed to regulations and legal frameworks but also the formulation of integrated strategies in search of sustainable results as common responses to common regional problems, such as TCOs and their use of humanitarian issues, as well as the coordination and governance of the bloc in response to corruption or misuse of state structures.

Another crucial political solution should involve addressing the problems with a focus on the financial aspect of the TCOs, acknowledging the economy of crime and their search for financial gains by exploiting the least resistance paths associated with the bloc. This is a key element in formulating multidimensional responses that include building specialized skills, interagency cooperation, as well as cross-border cooperation.

This approach involves recognizing the failure of the singular use of the hard power of the State, where years of war policies on drugs have not succeeded in reducing the problem at the regional level. Thus, since the States are unable to permanently use their hard power and, considering the inability of soft power to act effectively in the entire dimension of the problem, an intelligent power is required of the countries, in a capacity to combine hard and soft power into a winning strategy (Nye, 2006).

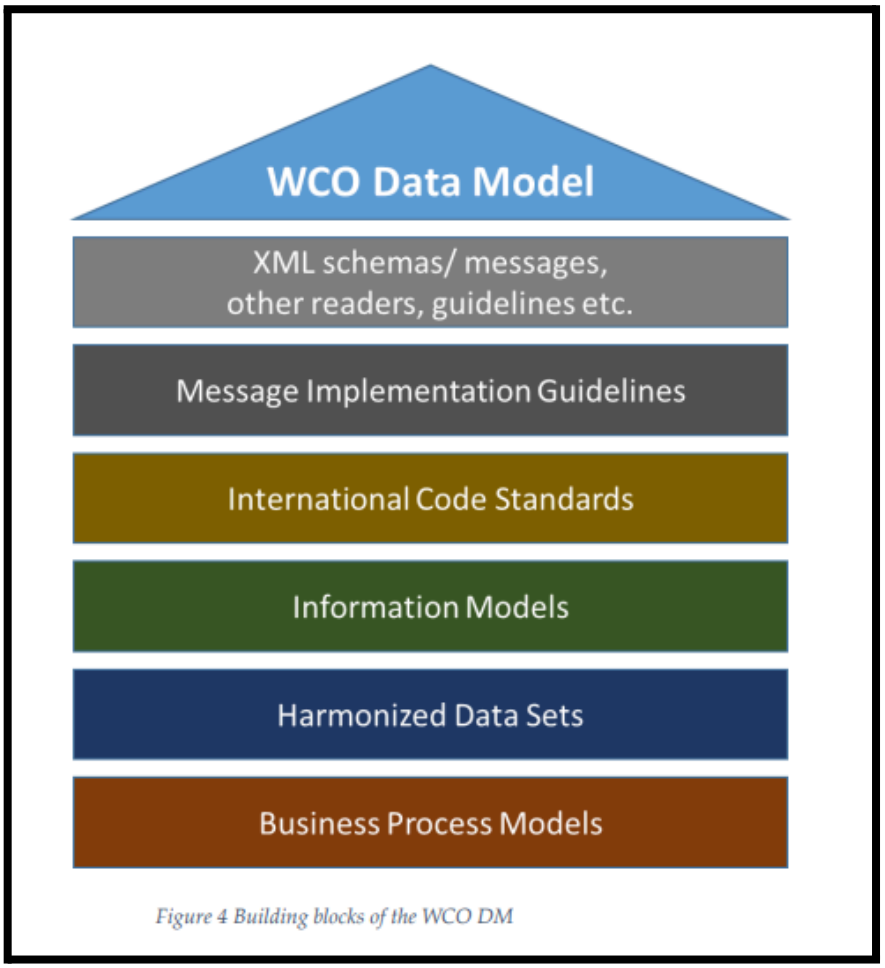
An apparently capable means of intelligent regional political action on the problem implies the mutual action of countries through a flow of information among the actors involved in strategic opposition to the advance of crime in the region. This initiative is viable through the creation of inter-institutional, bilateral and multilateral fusion centers focused on Intelligence, recognizing each country as holder of situational knowledge in matters of its own borders, adopting a multilateral concept in regional security (Angelo, 2022).

Within this informational framework, there is an increasing need for qualified information at all levels, allowing both the development of common policies and the preparation of harmonized security plans. Special focus is required on monitoring the progress of TCOs and conducting joint and permanent risk analysis for the region, with emphasis on the use of roads and maritime hubs of the Bi-Oceanic Route as points of vulnerability.

In this sense, the letter of Brasília itself, which reinforces the understanding of the construction of the Bi-Oceanic Route, recognizes the indispensability of creating support structures and related, modern, and efficient customs and inspection procedures in optimizing cargo transportation, as well as efficient and effective border control of the movement of people between the countries involved in the project with the use of technologies and cooperation between border services (Brasil, 2000).

Thus, for the highway modal, it is necessary to promote an electronic platform and other cargo monitoring instruments along the corridor and the monitoring of customs processes, based on the compatibility of the information. In this context, the Brasília letter suggests the use of the data model - DM proposed by the World Customs Organization as an international standard for data exchange and as a semantic hub.

Figure 14 - Business Guide on the WCO Data Model.



Source: WMO, 2022, p. 23.

The model aims to simplify and standardize the language used in the databases of cross-border entities, including customs, in order to guarantee global interoperability and data exchange, helping the formulation of common data strategies, enabling the implementation of automated feeding systems data analysis (WCO, 2023).

However, regarding the maritime hubs present in ports, logistics security requires increased compliance from Chile and/or Peru in the Pacific Ocean, and from Brazil, in its connection to the Atlantic Ocean with the ISPC Code (International Ship and Port Facility Security). The code serves as a potential means of mitigating, or at least hindering, illegal intercontinental connection between Asia and Europe or Africa using South America. It also helps prevent a possible expansion of TCOs present in the region.

In effect, the ISPS Code, established in 2004 by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea - SOLAS, of the International Maritime Organization - IMO, defines the essential safety requirements for ships, ports, terminals, carriers, people of sea and cargo as a means of preventing maritime security risks or any loss (IMO, 2005), and laid the foundations for a comprehensive mandatory security regime for transport, control and monitoring of international maritime access.

In this direction, an example of good practice already available in Brazil concerns to the ARESP methodology (*Análise de Risco com Ênfase em Segurança Portuária*), in English: Risk Analysis with Emphasis in Port Security methodology, winner of the 2021 Public Spirit Award in Public Safety´s category in Brazil. The framework performs a standardization of procedures in Brazilian ports, in compliance with the ISPS Code, with risk assessment as a fundamental element for the consolidation of the Port Security Plan (Andrade; Albuquerque, 2019).

Finally, a possible response to the problem also involves the involvement and responsibility of the private sector, both in transport and in the use of the necessary infrastructure for the Bioceanic route. In this sense, the project of the route itself foresees the participation of private actors and civil society in the implementation of the corridor, with governments being responsible for the development and application of combined models of accountability and corporate governance.

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