

**Pinzón, V. (2015). *Cooperation and Security in the War on Drugs: Plan Colombia and the Merida Initiative*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.**

To establish how governments in the Latin American region have cooperated in the war on drugs from a perspective focused on the structure of the international system.

Compiles the perspective on cooperation and conflict in international relations; security, securitization and illicit drugs; cooperation and enforcement in the U.S. relationship with Colombia and Mexico on illicit drugs; drugs and securitization in the Plan Colombia and the Merida Initiative.

The international drug prohibition regime and the fight against drug trafficking have been characterized by a punitive and coercive approach, a policy that has proven to be ineffective and whose effects have been self-defeating, generating even more damage than the problem it seeks to combat. In this sense, after more than two decades of a war that has left a trail of violence, poverty and corruption, the problem not only continued, but also witnessed the transformation of criminal networks that spread throughout the region and are linked to other illicit economies.

The basic premise for the configuration of the ethos is that, in an increasingly dangerous world, the identity and destiny of the nation must be protected. Two valid instruments for national security are thus considered to be war and the promotion of core values abroad. The ethos of security has a direct impact on US foreign policy, encouraging unilateral action and militarism. The ethos of security view of illicit drugs has led to the problem being seen in terms of threat and enemy, leading to the coercive and militaristic treatment that endures to this day.

In this sense, the anti-drug policies implemented in Colombia and Mexico reveal a varied panorama where the diversity of interests and concerns are involved and oscillate between conflict and cooperation. Because of this, illicit drugs have become an institution within the relations of the United States with Colombia and Mexico, one that reflects a set of identities and interests on the part of these countries and that has led to the development and routinization of practices, which, in turn, have shaped the bilateral relationship between the countries.

Plan Colombia and Plan Merida are the largest security initiatives, with the participation of the United States that have been implemented in the hemisphere over the past decade. The common feature of these two plans is the consideration of illicit drugs as a security threat, that is, there is a securitization of illicit drugs, which puts the problem on the public agenda and allows for the mobilization of exceptional resources. However, the discourses vary depending on the internal politics, identities and interests of each of the countries involved.